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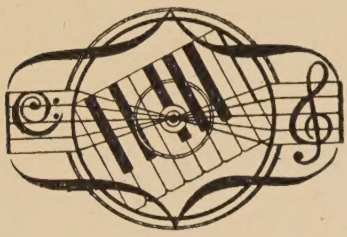

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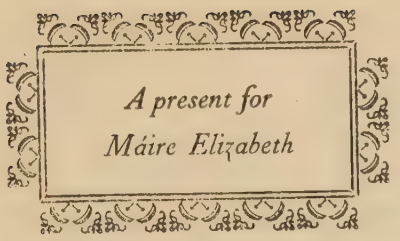
A present for
Máire Elizabeth

Acknowledgements

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Page 49. *Chronicle of My life*, Igor Strawinsky. (Published Gollancz, 1936).

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Page 157. *Beethoven*, Romain Rolland. (Published Kegan Paul, 1921).

Page 172. *Bach*, Rutland Boughton. (Published John Lane, 1927).

Page 185. 'Ode to Music', Robert Bridges. *Poetical Works*. (Published Oxford University Press, 1914).

Dear Máire,

You wanted me to write a book for you. Here it is. You won't be able to read it until you are a big girl—something teen—but when you can, you must remember that you helped to write it.

You and your brothers were always so nice to the people I have written about. If to no-one else you were most polite. *Mr* Wagner, *Mr* Handel, *Mr* Haydn. . . You were always sad about Mr Wagner having no money, or about his lost dog. You would ask every day about someone or other.

You made all these people—and their music—live. One could never be with you and think of dead musicians. Lots of grown-up people can think of no musicians but dead ones. Isn't that awful?

Michael wanted some of our friends to go into an opera. I hope he won't be annoyed to find them—all but the policeman—in a book instead. They ought to go into some book, because such people keep music alive.

If you ever have to do examinations in music this book will be rather useless. It isn't bothered with dates very much (after all when we talked about the chapters you didn't know there were 'dates'): it doesn't give you the sort of things that you-know-who's books do: biography that is often cock-eyed and quite meaningless; lists of music that you never hear. You know why we have twelve composers in this book. Everybody isn't like you so I must explain that where we live we naturally think of a first eleven—with a twelfth man. I am sorry that Mr Purcell only gets in as a reserve. But he is not often very easy for beginners in music.

I have arranged an order which leads from familiar places

and people to unfamiliar. Anyone can, of course, read any chapter when they want to. They needn't go from I to XII just like that.

I expect some people will think you a naughty little girl. For you and I have more often laughed than cried about serious things. Many people (think of Mrs —) are miserable when listening to, or talking about, music. Not us!

By the way, you won't understand all that I have to say. Nobody ever does. But you must remember that even very old people like me don't know everything. In fact the older we grow the less we seem to know—about music.

When I write a book I usually thank a whole lot of people. This time we won't put any names. All those who help us to do concerts and operas, who play oboes and clarinets (and sea machines) would feel shy if they got into the foreword.

Shall I just say 'thank you' to you and Michael and Julian for thinking of so many nice things?

P.M.Y.

MUSIC MAKERS

ELGAR

CHAPTER ONE

ELGAR

(1857-1934)

'THAT IS SOME of the most inspiring music I've ever heard,' I said to my friend. It was a song which you would know if you lived in Llanelly, from where it comes, or if you watched Rugby football matches in South Wales. My friend and I were at St Helen's, Swansea: the sea was behind, mountains in front. A wintry wind swept thirty-thousand voices, magnificent voices, across the field in gusts of harmony.

The music we heard was not 'great' music, but it was made to sound great. It expressed something that was felt by all those people: pride, dignity, hope and faith. Music which can so express a common feeling is, in its own way, great. Nothing else can take its place.

The thoughts of nations—those which make national traditions—are best expressed simply. The great speeches of Mr Churchill, the immortal signal of Lord Nelson, the epitaph on the Spartans at Thermopylae contain few words. The song we heard at Swansea had few notes. There are other pieces of music which have this quality. The 'Old Hundredth', 'O God Our Help in Ages Past', the Dead March from *Saul*, some of the ancient chorales which are familiar through Bach, 'The Flowers of the Forest', 'Land of Hope and Glory'. You can continue the list.

Sometimes we feel that we oughtn't to say that we like music of this kind—our friends will suspect that we have

bad taste. Now good taste is not a matter of thinking that we understand what other people don't: it is much more concerned with an appreciation of the fact that other people's opinions may be as good as our own. In music it is also a matter of seeing that different music suits different occasions.

No one told me that 'Tipperary' was a good tune. I found it out once when I had to conduct it as part of a military scene in a pageant. If this kind of tune doesn't thrill you in that setting you can give up hope of deriving pleasure from music.

You won't be less excited when you hear Beethoven's fifth symphony after a grounding in good, robust popular music. You will be more excited.

'Land of Hope and Glory' is another starting point in music. No one has ever told me that is a good tune: many have told me that it is bad. Listen to it, sing it. Decide for yourself whether you like it or not. Think of it as playing to a vast crowd of people—of simple people who believe (not improperly) that tunes are what count in music.

Now think of the man who made the tune. Clearly, from this music, he believed that music itself meant more than symphony concerts or recitals of chamber music. He believed that you and I, our brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts, should be given good, broad, singable melodies to remember. He tried to do what the makers of folk-songs tried to do—to create music for the whole community. He was no 'high-brow'. Great musicians never are. 'High-brows' are those who discuss what they don't understand in language which no one else can understand.

Edward Elgar might truthfully be called a master musician. He went through the previous stages of apprentice and

journeyman. He served his time, as we shall see, in Worcester: a small, relatively unimportant, though beautiful, cathedral city in the west midlands.

Many musicians feel that they appreciate Mozart better for having visited Salzburg. A day in Worcester and another day in the surrounding country helps us towards Elgar.

The city of Worcester has not changed vastly since Edward Elgar was born, at Broadheath nearby, on June 2nd, 1857. It is still a county town and therefore the cultural and business centre for people for miles around. It is dominated by the graceful, grey cathedral which rides proudly above the River Severn. Every third year Worcester Cathedral is the setting for the Three Choirs Festival, which has an honourable history of two centuries. (Gloucester and Hereford have the Festival the other years.) If you live in Worcester you can, then, every three years enjoy a week of music—old music and new music, foreign music and British music. Worcester at that time, with its influx of visitors, becomes important.

Worcester has other social attractions. It is a centre for cricket, with a lovely ground by the river, on which all the teams from overseas start their season. There are horse races too. One of the races unusually commemorates a great musician, because it is named the 'Elgar Plate'. Elgar was interested in many parts of Worcester life and his music reflects a good deal of the pride and independence characteristic of the community to which he belonged.

The 'Enigma' Variations recall a number of friends who belonged mostly to Worcester or the surrounding towns and country.

Outside the city there is a beautiful countryside: quietly

beautiful, for everything is neat, orderly, rather small, but always fresh and green. You may read about Worcestershire in the novels of Francis Brett Young, in some of the speeches of a former Prime Minister, Lord Baldwin, who was a Worcestershire man. The opening scene of an ancient and famous poem, the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, is on the Malvern Hills.

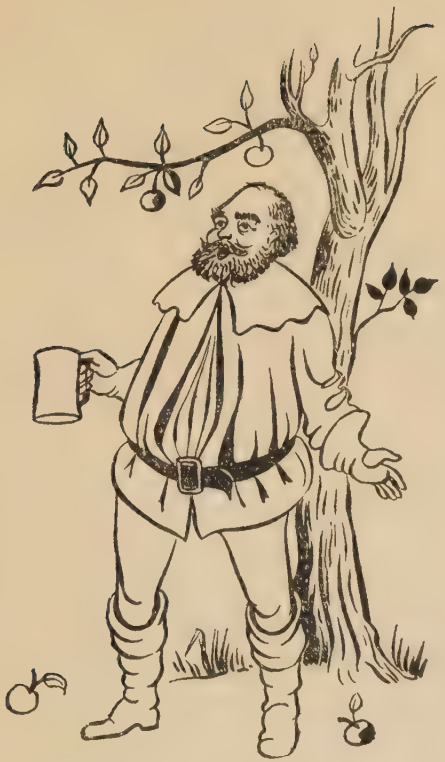
Beauty, wherever it may be found, affects the sensitive mind and what the artist says comes in some way from what he has heard or seen.

Shakespeare contains in his poetry a large part of Warwickshire. Elgar in his music a large part of Worcestershire.

The two men come close together in one work—*Falstaff*. In this long symphonic poem Elgar recreates, in music, the character of Sir John Falstaff. From time to time Elgar appears to refer to the quiet loveliness of the countryside but nowhere more than in the episode named 'Shallow's Orchard'. Although this, in fact, was in Gloucestershire no one will complain if a neighbouring county is in mind.

You will hear a great work like *Falstaff* when you have heard a number of smaller works. 'The Waggon Passes' from the *Nursery Suite* will serve very well to take you for a rural ride. Once it is realised that the influence of nature was as strong on Elgar as on most of our great poets, it will be detected in all sorts of music written by him. In the *Introduction and Allegro* for strings, in such a part-song as 'After many a Dusty Mile', in the slow movement of the *Violin Concerto*, in the episode 'At the Beautiful Gate' in *The Kingdom*.

In these, and many other places, Elgar holds our gaze on some vision of rare beauty (which he has seen and which,



Falstaff

but for him, we should have missed). The beauty is akin to that given by the play of sunlight on trees, by the contrast of hills and clouds, by the pattern of water. Such beauty is always there but it needs the artist, the poet, the musician to tell us to look.

The genius of an artist lies not so much in what he thinks but in his persistence in saying what he thinks. It is one thing to think of the book we would like to write: it is another to write it. Music comes into the composer's mind and is then set by him on paper. (Try to write a melody. Sing it and see if it sounds as you meant it to sound. Then think of the hard work required in the writing of a long orchestral or choral work.)

And when music is written down it calls for other people who are willing to learn it and to play (or sing) it.

Edward Elgar knew that he wanted to write music. He then learned how. After that he looked around for helpers.

His father kept a music shop in Worcester. In addition to selling music, however, he performed in local societies. So it was that Edward Elgar became associated with the Worcester Glee Club. He played the piano, conducted, and found that music meant for large orchestras often became possible for small combinations when rearranged. The Glee Club Orchestra was able to perform (probably not very well) Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* overture when Elgar made an arrangement.

At the age of twenty Elgar led another local orchestra. At this time he was studying the violin with a view to becoming a violinist. He also played the bassoon. If you want to learn how to write orchestral music follow Elgar's example and play an orchestral instrument. Your popularity will

be greater if you learn something other than the violin!

Still in search of experience (and a livelihood) Elgar looked after the music at the County Lunatic Asylum. (To avoid misunderstanding, the band was formed from among the staff.) Frequently the music played was composed by the bandmaster who, in his more exalted moments, played in the Cathedral among the first violins in the Festival orchestra.

Unless he has many influential friends, the way of a young composer is often very hard between the ages of twenty and thirty. He must write sufficient music for audiences to become aware of him. This takes not only thought but, more urgently, time. Early works are rarely immediately profitable and a composer must (although romantic people have other ideas) live.

Elgar set out as do many composers. He taught, he played the organ, he conducted provincial and amateur societies, and in such spare time as was available, composed.

Some early works had a limited and local success. They were an *Intermezzo; Sérénade Mauresque* (1883), performed by a Birmingham orchestra with which Elgar sometimes played; *Sevillana* (1884) written for the Worcester Philharmonic Society; the overture *Froissart* (1889-90), performed in Worcester at the Three Choirs Festival; *The Black Knight* (1893) a cantata, which, through the interest of the organist of Worcester Cathedral—Dr Blair—was given also in Worcester. In 1893 a work which is still heard, and which is worth hearing and playing in, was played at the Hereford Festival. This was the *Serenade for Strings*.

The early history of Elgar is not distinguished by anything save perseverance.

He was, despite an occasional performance at the Crystal

Palace, unknown in London. His fame was local. Much credit should be given to those in the Midlands who encouraged Elgar. It *sounds* easy for a local orchestra to include works by a local composer in a programme. In fact it is not at all easy. Audiences often persuade themselves that what comes from somewhere else is much to be preferred to what comes from among themselves.

If, however, we are to have regional festivals, the art created in the particular region must be developed.

The subjects of Elgar's early works show where his interest lay. In *Froissart* and *The Black Knight*—a poem by Longfellow from the German of Uhland—there was the fascination of early, knightly history. Whether you approve it or not (and there are critics who dislike music before they hear it because it grows out of literary ideas of which they disapprove) there is no doubt that Elgar could suggest, like Sir Walter Scott, the colour and pageantry which we associate with the great ages of history.

Later works with the same sense of pageantry were *King Olaf* (1896), *Caractacus* (1898), the overture *Cockaigne* (1901) and *Falstaff* (1913).

I must confess that when I hear *Cockaigne*, which the composer subtitled 'In London Town', with its flurries of semiquavers, its great (and characteristic) *fff* outbursts, its frequent *nobilmente* passages, its sentimental murmurings (*poco a poco tranquillo*), its *scherzando* cheekiness, its brassy *brillante e marcato* I have no need of programme notes to tell me what is what. (And notice, as we pass by, how much the smallest details in any score that we read can tell us: how in this case the expression marks give a good set of imprints of the composer's musical fingerprints.)

If Elgar does not produce a picture of London in this work he does, at least, evoke thoughts about London—and the title helps to direct our thoughts. His music is filled with many vivid, coloured contrasts; and that, surely, is as London. I was there the other day and, as it happened, in St James's Park. With me I had one of my favourite authors. It was Leigh Hunt, who loved and understood London and also wrote with great knowledge and skill about music.

I turned to one of his London essays—'The Park (St James)'. What I read was exciting. For there was an incomparable word picture about the very place in which I was. At the same time he did not fail to introduce music into his picture, just as in the Elgar music we are, in a sense, aware of literature. Leigh Hunt recalled himself as a schoolboy—'. . . . will he ever forget how some regiment of horse used to come over the Park to Whitehall, in the midst of this parade, and pass the foot-soldiers with a sound of clustering magnificence and dancing trumpets? Will he ever forget how the foot then divided itself into companies, and turning about and deploying before the colonel, marched off in the opposite direction, carrying away the schoolboy himself and the crowd of spectators with it; and so, now with the brisk drums and fifes, and now the deeper glories of the band, marched gallantly off for the courtyard of the palace, where it again set up its music-book, and enchanted the crowd with Haydn or Mozart? What a strange mixture, too, was the crowd itself—boys and grown men, gentlemen, vagabonds, maidservants—there they all went listening, idling, gazing on the ensign or the band-major, keeping pace with the march, and all of them more or less, particularly the maidservants, doting on the "sojers". We, for one, confess to

having drunk deep of the attraction, or the infection, or the balmy reconcilement (whichever the reader pleases to call it). Many a holdiay morning have we hastened from our cloisters in the city to go and hear "the music in the Park", delighted to make one in the motley crowd, and attending upon the last flourish of the hautboys and clarionets.'

And as I read on, learning how a schoolboy in London was brought to the beauties of Haydn and Mozart by a regimental band, I thought of the pageantry of Elgar (for the overture *Cockaigne* seems in many ways to be a convincing parallel in music to the evocative prose of Leigh Hunt); and all those tunes of Elgar which I had heard in parks or on sea-side promenades came to mind.

The imaginative mind can travel in time or in space. At Christmas we sit down and look at snapshots taken during the summer holidays. We sit and dream and in our dreams we live again in Wales or Scotland, or wherever it might be. Elgar wrote much music to recall places for which he had an affection. Sometimes he told us in the title. The *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* (which, with pianoforte accompaniment, can be tackled by an enthusiastic school choir) were composed (1896) after a holiday in Germany. *In the South*, an overture, remembers an Italian holiday of 1904. As in many other works Elgar tries to give a clue as to the feelings he is expressing by attaching a literary quotation.

a land
Which was the mightiest in its old command
And is the lovliest. . . .
Wherein were cast. . . .
the men of Rome!
Thou art the garden of the world.

In the South is sometimes heard today, but the attempt at musical illustration is not so convincing as it was formerly. Perhaps Elgar was trying too hard 'to give a sound-picture of the strife and wars, the "dreams and tramplings" of a later time'—to quote his own words.

A slighter early work which catches the eye as well as the ear is the introduction to the third scene of the cantata *Caractacus* (1898). Here the scene is a forest near the Severn, in Elgar's own country. Since it is morning we may set the music beside a famous piece, from the *Peer Gynt* music, by Grieg. Elgar's does not suffer in comparison. It has modesty and speaks, as it were, of a man who waited until nature should speak to him. There are some composers (even Beethoven in the sixth symphony) and some poets (Wordsworth at his most tiresome) who express an affection for nature but seem disinclined to let her get a word in edgeways.

It will be noticed that Elgar's works multiplied towards the end of the nineteenth century. Some of them, thanks to the interest of such musicians as Dr Auguste Manns, who conducted concerts at the Crystal Palace and Dr Hans Richter, who brought Wagnerian ideals of performance to England, were played in London. One work stood out as among the great works of the period, whether English or foreign.

That was the set of variations on an original theme—the 'Enigma'. The years of endeavour with meagre orchestral resources in the provinces were proved worth while. Here was an ability to paint with all the varied colours of the modern (i.e. post Wagnerian) orchestra far beyond anything achieved by any other native composer. The instruments come to life. So that the oboe in the third variation, the viola

in the sixth, the drums in the seventh, the clarinets in the eighth, the brass in the ninth, the strings and the woodwind in the tenth appear before us as characters.

And, indeed, characters are intended; for each variation carries the initials of a friend and gives some insight into that friend's personality.

You may learn much about orchestration from this work, much about 'variation form'; but much more about the living character of great music. You can feel that melodies (together with their harmonies) compel interest just as intensely as characters in a book. In arranging a melody for orchestra, in choosing the proper instruments, the composer stresses his character appropriately.

Many years ago I sat beside a lady at a Three Choirs Festival concert. 'Do you know who that is?' said a friend. I didn't. It was Miss Fitton who used to play the viola for Elgar. She is 'Isobel' of the seventh variation. That is why the viola is so important in that variation.

There is an opinion that musicians are different from other men. In some ways they are, but these are secret ways. 'Dorabella' of the tenth variation was the daughter of the Rector of Wolverhampton. Sometimes Elgar visited the Rectory. If it happened to be on a Saturday he would go next door but one—to see Wolverhampton Wanderers play football! That, of course, did not make Elgar a greater composer, but it added to his interest in humanity at large and explains the understanding of simple minds which gave *Salut d'amour* to the world.

Two works, *The Banner of St George* and the *Imperial March*, effectively commemorated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. This music, if now out of favour, being not

ashamed of itself, sounded right at a time of national rejoicing. It certainly assisted the composer's reputation. It set him in the way to becoming a national, possibly, indeed, a nationalist, composer.

It was customary for an English composer to write an oratorio. Most made the mistake of imitating Mendelssohn or Handel, who, being great, were inimitable. In the case of Handel they thought they were imitating Handel but were, in fact, imitating what the nineteenth century considered Handel ought to sound like. That is, very loud, rather pompous, and extremely respectable.

Elgar departed from convention by writing *The Dream of Gerontius*, to a poem by Cardinal Newman. The poem had once been shown to Dvořák. Fortunately he left it. Elgar was, by upbringing, a Catholic. Newman was an Englishman. Their association produced a monumental essay in choral-orchestral (for each partner is equal in importance) music. Borrow a score of *Gerontius*. Play the first two pages of the Prelude, the orchestral opening of Part II, the Angel's Farewell. Play those passages until they are firm in your memory. You will have, for ever, some of the most moving music ever written. Then hear the whole work.

The first performance, in Birmingham, was in 1901. I met a man recently who took part. 'It was awful', he said, 'the choir didn't want to sing *Gerontius*. It wasn't what they were used to. It was too modern.' Perhaps there is a moral there.

Fortunately for the honour of England, the Lower Rhine Festival performed *Gerontius* at Düsseldorf and showed its greatness.

Other Elgar oratorios were *The Apostles* (1903) and *The Kingdom* (1906). The second, somewhat more slender, is

the more beautiful and does not suffer, as does *The Apostles*, by comparison with greater works on the same subject.

When Bach treats of the crucifixion, in the *St Matthew Passion* we feel true sympathy (sym-pathy—two Greek words—means 'to suffer with'). With Elgar we are onlookers. We even enjoy being onlookers. So we may distinguish those who understand 'tragedy' from those who don't. The very great—Bach, for instance, know and express tragedy: the less great, in this case Elgar, do neither.

There are other works in which Elgar comes near to tragedy, but avoids the subject. In *The Spirit of England*, and particularly the setting of Binyon's 'For the Fallen' which forms a part, there is the pageantry of war, perhaps something of nobility, but little of pain or suffering.

Coming to maturity in the reign of King Edward VII, however, Elgar lived among those to whom unpleasantness was distasteful, whose creed generally revolved round the 'rightness' of the world as it was, whose faith was in the British Empire. The poet of imperial optimism was Kipling. In his day men spoke of

lesser breeds without the Law.

The music of Elgar carries something of Kipling. It should, however, be noticed that Kipling's ideas on politics are one thing: his genius as a poet another. Because Elgar wrote Imperial masques (*The Crown of India:* 1912) and marches (as for the British Empire Exhibition of 1924) and a *Pageant of Empire* he should not be regarded as a bad musician. The music certainly indicates a point of view with which we may disagree; but as music, for a purpose, it is good.

Some of the enthusiasm here described overflows, however, into other works. The two symphonies, magnificent in rich colour, sound apt not for all time—as, say, those of Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert—but for one period.

The first symphony (in A flat) was conducted by Richter, to whom it was dedicated, and played by the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester on December 3rd, 1908. 'Gentlemen', said Richter to the orchestra, 'let us now rehearse the greatest symphony of modern times, written by the greatest modern composer—and not only in this country.'

What Richter said indicates how Elgar had raised the status of the English composer.

The second symphony (in E flat) was produced three years after the first. It was dedicated to the memory of King Edward VII.

Between two symphonies there came another large work, more finely shaped than either of them—the *Violin Concerto*. In the slow movement Elgar seems to return to his own province of beauty in his own experience. Here, more than in the more ambitious movements of the symphonies, he stands alone, inimitable.

Standing alone is one mark of genius: it is also part of the penalty exacted of genius. Often the great creative artist must stand

Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

It is not in the wealthy noise of orchestral tuttis, not in the passages marked *nobilmente*, that the genius of Elgar is to be appreciated. Such passages may be enjoyed; they are necessary contrasts; they are period pieces, speaking of a time that was. The gentler music of Elgar, where he looks at

nature, where he looks at childhood—as in the *Wand of Youth* or *Nursery Suites* or in the wistful *Dream Children*; this is the true Elgar. This is where we begin to collect quotations for the memory.

Elgar was a great national figure. He achieved much outside of composition. He will be remembered as a poet. among composers His knighthood (1904), his Order of Merit (1911), his Professorship at Birmingham (1905) will be forgotten. But that he attained his objective—to become a composer—will not be forgotten. How did he become a composer? By teaching himself from the books in his father's shop; by listening to music; by practising music wherever he could; by undertaking such duties as came his way; by doggedness and perseverance.

There is no easy way to musical greatness. Most, when they discover this, turn aside. That is why such composers as Elgar are rare. Since he was English he demonstrated—what in his early days had been regarded as improbable and improper—that there was no natural law preventing composers from being born and nurtured in the English provinces.

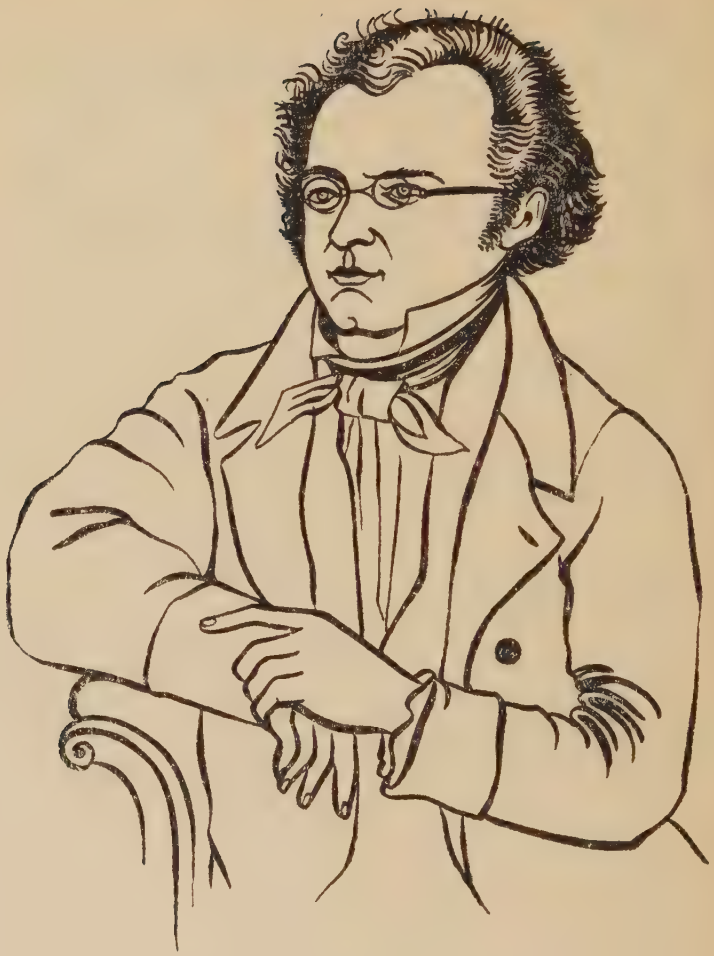
I: *ELGAR*

Suggested works to (try to) perform

Chanson de matin (arr. violin and pianoforte)	Novello
'Enigma' Variations (arr. 2 pianofortes)	,,
Fly, singing bird (for high voices)	,,
Nursery Suite (arr. pianoforte)	Keith Prowse
Sonata in E minor for violin and pianoforte	Novello
The Snow (for high voices)	,,

Suggested works to hear

Concerto in B minor for violin and orchestra	HMV-DB 1751/6
Dream of Gerontius, The	HMV C 3435/3446
Introduction and Allegro for Strings	HMV C 3669/70
Overture—Cockaigne	HMV DB 1935/6
Pomp and Circumstance Marches (1-5)	Decca K 1140 (Nos. 1 and 2) K 1141 (Nos. 3 and 4) K 1354 (No. 5)
Wand of Youth Suites (1 and 2), The	Decca AK 2190/2 (No. 1) Decca AX 465/6 (No. 2)



SCHUBERT

CHAPTER TWO

SCHUBERT

(1797-1828)

THERE ARE SOME composers whom we respect because they say what we ourselves would never think of saying. There are others who say what we think we would say—if we could. Schubert, for example, writes tunes which more often than not sound exactly like the tunes which go round and round inside our heads. Our tunes, however, are obstinate. They stay inside our heads and don't seem able to get out.

With Franz Schubert the case was very different. Tunes poured out. Songs, symphonies, sonatas, chamber music, church music. Wherever we look melodies, melodies which we cannot forget, abound. Almost without thinking these cross the mind: 'Hedge Roses', 'The Erl King', 'Hark! Hark the Lark', 'Who is Sylvia', the 'Unfinished symphony'; the music for *Rosamunde*; the Impromptu in A flat for pianoforte; the 'Trout' Quintet, the quartet called—because, like the previous work, it is based on a song—'Death and the Maiden'; the setting of the 23rd Psalm.[1]

With the titles come the tunes.

I was very grateful that, aged seven or eight, and in a church choir, my first introduction to Schubert was through the wonderful, grave *Litany*. Small boys are often more

[1] Schubert set the German version which had been made by Mendelssohn's grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn the writer and philosopher.

solemn than older people imagine, and music of this order may make, as in my case it did, a deep and lasting impression? But how did Schubert make such an impression? By his simplicity.

Schubert shows, more almost than any other musician, what Shelley meant when he said that poetry (and I think he meant all the arts) should show familiar things as though they were unfamiliar. If we think of this we should forget an overworked proverb: familiarity breeds contempt. This only applies when we look at what is familiar without imagination.

When I lived in the Potteries, well-meaning friends were sympathetic. 'How anyone could live there. . . .' Sometimes the industrial setting made scenes of exquisite beauty. A red, winter sunset silhouetting a mass of pottery kilns; in the foreground a canal with coloured waters and snow covered banks. The general scene was familiar—I saw it most days. I knew every building. I could see them with shut eyes. But that particular setting was unique. Being unique, it was unforgettable.

The secret of that beauty was the contrast of lights and shades. Listen to the 'Unfinished' symphony. The opening tune, deep down in cellos and basses, is dark: the second tune is brighter. It is not, of course, a high tune (you would play it with your left hand on the pianoforte), but it is gay with a swinging, infectious rhythm. The first tune is in a minor key (B minor), the second is in a major key (G major). So, all in all, we see a high contrast—with our ears. The second movement holds more contrast. To take only one point, it lies in E major and spreads itself wonderfully over that key, opening out as a flower will unfold its petals with the sunrise.

Apart from his melodies it is for his perception of different musical colours that Schubert is remarkable. His colours are transparent; they let light through. Less gifted composers—Spohr, for example, who was a near contemporary—put on their colours but keep the light out. In painting, great painters—Constable, Turner, Renoir, van Gogh—turn their faces to the light. Or in poetry. John Addington Symonds and John Keats both write of autumn—

(1) *The west is purple, and a golden globe,*
Sphered with new-risen moonlight, hangs between
The skirts of evening's amethystine robe,
And the round world bathed with steady sheen.

(2) *Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,*
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;

In the first case the light does not shine through the colour of the words. In the second it does. The first quotation comes to grief over a 'poetic' word: amethystine.

When we speak of colour in connection with Schubert's music we mean chords, keys; the relation of chord to chord and key to key.

The point may be made more clear if we look at what we know. In 'Hark! Hark, the Lark' you will remember

And winking Marybuds begin
To ope their golden eyes.

You will remember also that the music itself seems to change—to reflect the gold of the Marybuds. To say that the key changes from B flat major to G flat major is to put a poetic fact in cold, scientific language. So, if you should

'learn harmony' and should be able to 'analyse' music don't forget that technical language is a poor way of conveying what genius has accomplished.

Keep your mind on the poetic side and you will keep your enthusiasm: keep it on the scientific and you may lose it. Let the poetry shine through the science and you will come near to the standpoint of the great artist (even though your accomplishment is slight) in that feeling and knowledge will be allies.

Schubert marvellously united what he had learned from his predecessors, particularly Mozart and Beethoven, with what flowed directly from his own imagination.

It is with the songs that we first become acquainted. As I learned to sing some of them when very young, so do you. We remember these songs, as we remember the poems we learn at the same time of life. They are a starting point for musical experience. As it happens, the songs of Schubert, of which there are some six hundred, represent most entirely the working of the composer's own imagination.

The period in which Schubert lived was also the period in which German poetry, in lyrical form, flourished. There was a conscious endeavour to catch in words imagery—from nature or (exploring as we have noticed in the case of Elgar) legend—to make the reader *see* the scene.

It is important to realise that Schubert did not arrive, as from another planet, with his special way of writing songs. He owed something to others who experimented, but who, like so many experimenters, achieved nothing more than what may be called "interesting". (With the exception of a few songs by Schulz and the famous *Erl King*—composed before Schubert's setting of the same poem—of Carl Loewe.)

In an anonymous *Tour in Germany*, which was published in Edinburgh in 1828, we read of the royal concerts in Berlin:

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'A favourite ballad, for instance of Schiller, Burger, or Goethe, is delivered by a reciter, just as any other elocutionist would read it, but is accompanied, either in a continued strain, or only by fits and starts, as the composer thinks proper, by instrumental music which is, or pretends to be, characteristic of the sentiment that pervades the particular verses, or representative of what they happen to describe. . . .' The last words mean much when we try to understand Romantic music.

The poets on whom Schubert principally drew were Goethe (who wrote 'The Erl King' and 'Margaret at the Spinning Wheel'), the greatest of his contemporaries: Schiller, whose poems formed part of Schubert's school lessons; Wilhelm Müller, author of the ballad-like *Maid of the Mill* sequence; Mayrhofer, a personal friend, Hölty (a dialect poet), Klopstock, and Körner, a patriotic poet. There were many other poets—Shakespeare, Scott, Petrarch—who came from far afield to influence Schubert's generation with a new and vivid sense of beauty.

In England at the same time we had poets of similar outlook: but we had no Schubert.

The striving for beauty in the sound of words is clear in a famous poem by Goethe:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;

Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

Ask someone (if you can't do it yourself) to read that to you in German. You may miss the meaning of the words, but you cannot, because of the character of the vowels, miss the general sense of repose.

Now listen to Schubert's setting ('Wanderer's Night-Song'). The music just carries the poem and makes no individual effort. In the melody one accidental—at *Kaum*—gives the tiny disturbance of the breeze. The accompaniment lies deep, both hands play in the bass, and suggests—as much German music by Weber, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Wagner—forest music.

Look now at 'The Organ Grinder' (*Der Leiermann*). The piano catches the title and imitates, very skilfully, the sound of the street organ. The vocal line, in one sense, is less important than the accompaniment. It is simpler and again serves to carry the words. But the melody, none the less, has its own, sad quality which enhances the meaning of the words.

'The Organ Grinder' is a homely song, in that it describes a sight familiar to anyone, in any town. It not only describes the outside of the organ grinder, but the inside—the feelings—as well.

In 'The Erl King' there is again a descriptive, riding, accompaniment. A minor key gives the sense of mystery; the broken voice part of terror; the major key the persuasion of the Erl King, the final bar and a half, of recitative, when the rhythmic beat is stopped, the tragedy.

Song after song follows a pictorial pattern, portraying

this scene or that, this character ('Margaret at the Spinning Wheel', the 'Young Nun', the 'Maid of the Mill') or that. The painting is vivid. We *must* see the picture. But we must also feel the emotions, either of the character described or of Schubert himself. As we grow older we realise that it is not only characters in poetry nor that of Schubert that we learn about: we learn about ourselves.

Schubert's genius made the songs. But they would not have been possible had the poets mentioned above not flourished when they did; if Beethoven, who said 'Truly this Schubert has the divine fire', had not explored new ways in the harmonic nature of music; if the pianoforte, which Schubert did so much to develop, had not presented all its possibilities of colour at the beginning of the nineteenth century; if there had not been a long tradition of German and Austrian folk song.

A genius arrives at the right time. He also arrives in the right place. Worcester, as we have seen, was the right place for Elgar. Vienna for Schubert.

Vienna was the capital city of Austria. As such it attracted many people. The wealthy followed the customs of the court. The less wealthy took their cue from those in close contact with the court. Kings, princes, bishops and dukes cultivated music throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus they hoped to distinguish themselves as men of culture, as leaders of fashion. Vienna was well supplied with aristocrats. Each employed musicians. We remember only the best of these musicians Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven (none of whom was born in the city, but was drawn thither by possibilities of employment), Schubert (who was a native) and, later, Brahms.

We can gain some idea of music in Vienna in the last year of Schubert's life if we visit the city with an English musician —Edward Holmes.

He admired the ancient buildings, remarked on the open spaces, disliked the Austrians and found their enthusiasm for opera distasteful. Whether at the court theatre or the smaller theatres audiences showed pleasure or displeasure in the same way that spectators do at football matches today. Interest and feeling overran politeness.

One night Holmes attended a midnight concert, given before St Stephen's Cathedral, by order of the Archbishop, at which there was music by Weber, by Beethoven, by Mozart. 'About one o'clock after midnight I returned home, thinking how sadly Germany has within the last year or two been bereft of those who have given her treasures of music and beauty.' Among those mourned were Weber and Beethoven, but also names unknown to us—Winter, Fesca and Romberg.

There were public concerts in the middle of the day. There were evening concerts at private houses (at which Mr Czerny, celebrated as an inventor of exercises, used to play). There was cathedral music, church music and the music of the Imperial Chapel. One could still meet, as Holmes did, those who had known Mozart.

If Schubert wrote much music there were many opportunities for performance. Often such performances were unremunerative. The songs were sung privately for the most part. The theatre music, including *Rosamunde*, generally failed. The early symphonies were designed for an amateur orchestra, which had originally been started at Schubert's father's house. The chamber music was either for amateurs

or for professional friends to play at the houses of Schubert's hospitable associates.

Of the chamber music attention should be given to the *Octet*—for clarinet, bassoon, horn, string quartet and double bass. This was written for and performed at the house of the Count von Troyer, who in turn was secretary to Beethoven's patron, the Archduke Rudolph.

The Octet is tuneful—look at the set of variations and the scherzo in particular—but is fuller of colour than much chamber music, and, therefore, to be recommended (a movement at a time) to those who are nervous of music in this form.

In writing his chamber music and his symphonies Schubert was following models with which he was familiar. But as he progressed, the shape of the models is less distinct. So the C major symphony, Schubert's greatest work in this form, is completely different from any symphony by any other composer. In some ways—its bigness as opposed merely to its length—it is different from any other work by Schubert. Yet it could be by no other composer than Schubert.

If inexperienced in music, listen to this work a movement at a time (here is the advantage of gramophone records). The second, third and fourth movements and *then*, I think, the first. For first movements, being the most complex in general, present more difficulties to immature listeners than the others. We recognise the second movement as a song without words, the third as a dance, the fourth as a grand finale. First movements in cold analysis *look* frightening. They probably aren't, but we still tend to think that they are!

Listen to the tunes—that for the oboe at the beginning of the second movement; that for the horns, before the oboe

tune reappears at bar 160, which stresses familiarity in a new aspect. For this is mainly a one-note tune. Listen to the second tune of the scherzo, as it swings into G major with a cheeky triplet figure. To the opening fanfare of the last movement, to the woodwind popular song idea which the woodwind soon bring in, to the horn melody which sets the whole symphony on its rich course.

If you don't understand this symphony you are in good company. For Schubert's Viennese contemporaries did not either. They didn't play it.

Ten years after Schubert's death Robert Schumann found it and persuaded Mendelssohn to conduct it in Leipzig. Schumann wrote a remarkable appreciation of this symphony of which one sentence must suffice:—

'I must say at once that he who is not yet acquainted with this symphony knows very little about Schubert.'

Before hearing the C major symphony, however, I should advise acquaintance with the fifth, in B flat major. This was written when the composer was eighteen and is more similar to the style of Mozart. It is neat, small and self-contained. No classical work could be less aloof and yet more classical.

What sort of man was Schubert? I am not sure that it matters very much whether we know the details of his life. There are few details which stand out, for he was not a notable public figure and had little connection with affairs other than musical. All that matters is in the music, and historical knowledge gives less understanding of his music than of that of almost any other composer.

Schubert's music is so entirely spontaneous that we accept it without question.

It is music which sounds to have been written quickly.

So it was. This seems remarkable until we consider that experts in any branch of life work very much quicker than those who are not. Schubert expressed himself most easily in music and, therefore, wrote as easily as others write letters. It seems equally incredible that Trollope wrote all his books in the time at his disposal. And Trollope was a busy government official.

There are many stories which tell of Schubert's speed—how he would suddenly turn aside at a party, captivated by a poem, to scribble a song.

When he had written a song he was often careless as to what happened to it. He concentrated, as an artist must. But the act of concentration often prevents attention to the normal, business routine of life. This is not only true of some musicians but also of some scientists, of some statesmen—and so on.

Because he was not a good business man Schubert remained relatively poor. Not being by nature 'efficient', he generally failed to obtain lucrative appointments. In 1816 he was unsuccessful in applying for the directorship of the music school at Leibach, near Trieste—ten years later the forgotten Josef Weigl was proposed as assistant director of music at the court. Early in life he taught a while in his father's school. His discipline was not very good. His temper was uncertain. These facts combined to secure his dismissal.

Schubert was good natured and untidy. He was below medium height, of stocky figure, and short-sighted. His dark curly hair thinned as he suffered illness after illness. He was never married, and, looking after himself, looked after himself badly. He had many friends who were tolerant, generous and understanding. There was Spaun, a state official, who

made Schubert familiar to musical society; Franz von Schober, an artist of more versatility than distinction; Mayrhofer, the poet; Michael Vogl, a great baritone singer; Baron von Schönstein, to whom the 'Maid of the Mill' songs were dedicated; Moritz von Schwind, the painter. A complete list would be very long and as you would immediately forget all the names it need not be compiled.

The important thing to remember is that such a circle of people who believed in him encouraged Schubert to believe in himself. That, not money, is what the artist needs more than anything else.

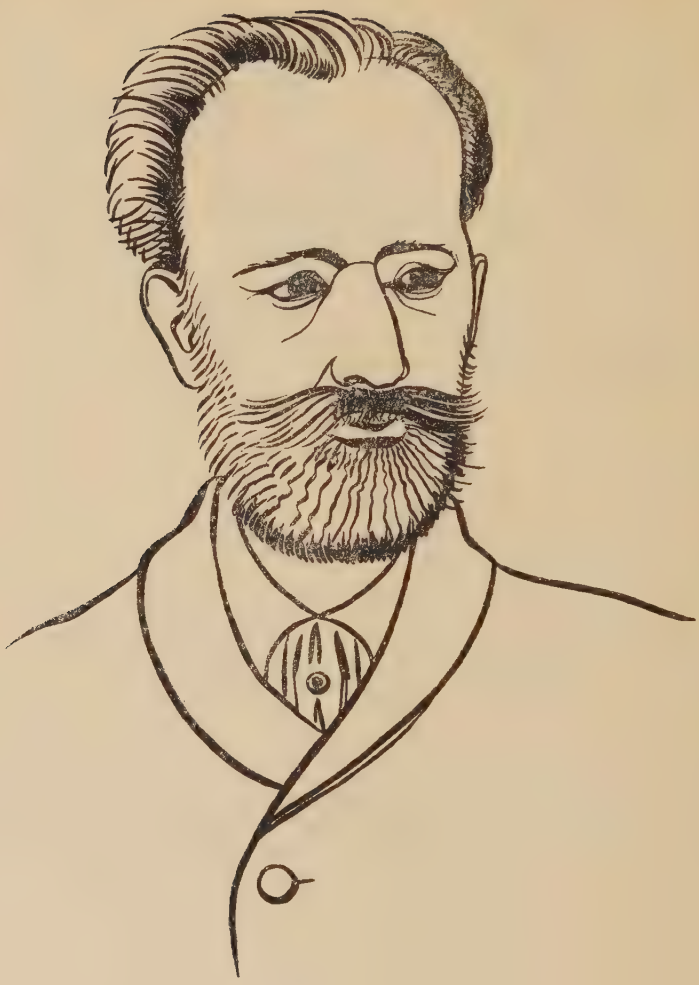
II: *SCHUBERT*

Works to perform

Four Impromptus (Op. 142)	Associated Board
Moments musicaux (Op. 94)	„ „
Sonatina in D major for violin and pianoforte (Op. 137 No 1.)	Augener
Song of Miriam, The (mixed voices and pianoforte)	Novello
Songs (24 favourite)	Schirmer
Symphony No. 8 in B minor (pianoforte duet)	Augener

Works to hear

Octet in F major (strings, clarinet, bassoon and horn)	Decca AK 2060/5
Quartet in D minor (Death and the Maiden)	Columbia DX 1089/92
Quintet in A major (The Trout)	HMV DB 2714/8
Rosamunde, incidental music for	HMV C 1873/4 and C 2233
Shepherd on the Rock, The (song with clarinet obbligato)	HMV C 3688
Symphony in C major (No. 7)	Columbia LX 1138/43



TCHAIKOVSKY

CHAPTER THREE

TCHAIKOWSKY

(1840-1893)

As I was coming home today I noticed a large cinema advertisement, announcing some picture or other in (gorgeous!) technicolour. (What, by the way is *techni*color—and would not colour do just as well?) I was also thinking about Tchaikowsky. How well technicolor, if we must use the word, suggests his most popular music.

The *Casse-noisette Suite*, the *Swan Lake* ballet music, the *1812 Overture*, the *Capriccio Italien*, the fantasia *Francesca da Rimini*, the first pianoforte concerto, the dances in *Eugen Onegin*, the fourth, fifth and sixth symphonies—all or any of which you may have heard—remain in the mind because of their wealth of orchestral colour. There is no music in existence more full of rich, varied colours, which is also so easily tuneful. Tuneful, that is, as Cousin Arthur understands the word. What he means is something that he can remember when he is in the bath and which, at the same time, the people downstairs can recognize.

'Tum, Tumpty, tum, tum, tump-tee. . . .' He is in the wrong key, but the family sigh, look at one another, and wait for Susan, who had lessons in Musical Appreciation; 'Symphonie Pathétique, third movement, *allegro molto vivace*'. That is a good tune, but it is not a very long one. When Cousin Arthur lies down, contented, in dirty warm water, he likes a good, broad, treacly tune with a little sentiment about it.

'Da, da, da, daa, daa-aa. . ., da, da, da, daa, daa-aa. . .' This really is a tune, he thinks, He puts it in the right key for it suits his voice. He is a tenor and it is a horn tune—which always gives that delicious malt-and-cod-liver-oil flavour. Apart from Susan, who belongs to the musical upper classes, and Elizabeth, who can't sing anyway, everybody joins in. Later on the record has to go on.

Much of the music of Tchaikowsky is music you could live with. As a matter of fact nobody found it very easy to live with the composer. He couldn't really understand why not and put the best of himself, as he saw himself, into his music so that everybody could see what a nice person he really was.

Fortunately Tchaikowsky saw many different people inside himself. He could, as in some degree we all can, see himself very fierce, very funny, very proud, very rich, very poor, very sad, very tender. In any one of the three familiar symphonies most or all of these qualities may easily be recognised. So easily that we feel we are reading a novel or a diary in which, perhaps, not very much is left for our imagination.

With Schubert—even though in the songs certain images are called up by the words and hinted at by the shape of the music—we feel ourselves to be looking at a hillside, coloured and patterned and a delight to the eye. Behind it are mysterious happenings, which we cannot fully understand, but which Schubert can. The case with Tchaikowsky is different. We are looking at a theatre set. Behind, despite the deceptive cyclorama, there are no unseen depths.

But if Tchaikowsky was theatrical, he was masterly in the handling of his material.

Take the *Casse-noisette Suite*. This is ballet music to decorate a charming story. The story changes a Nutcracker into a fairy prince. The fairy prince, who in his former, unhappy state had belonged to and been befriended by a girl called Clara, flies to the Kingdom of Sweets. The sweets are unrationed, as Clara, who goes with the prince, discovers. The Queen is the Sugar Plum fairy. There is a grand entertainment in which Spanish, Arab and Chinese dancers represent chocolate, coffee and tea. There are other dances, including a *Valse des fleurs*.

When you know the story you can see the characters in the music. Mind, you must know the story first, otherwise the music is less definite, for music by itself can tell us nothing about *things*.

After tasting the varied rhythms look at the orchestration —the way in which the figures are, musically, dressed. The Sugar Plum fairy herself with celeste and bass clarinet; the Arabs with sharp woodwind (cor anglais and two clarinets) sitting upon a very empty noise made by muted violas and cello, to which the tambourine adds a *pianissimo* jingle; the Chinese—flute and later piccolo as well, playing comically with a couple of rather rude bassoons; the valse—in the years before he died Tchaikowsky met Johann Strauss—with its harp and horns and delicious swirling strings.

If you want to know what orchestral instruments can do, this work will tell you.

Casse-noisette was not Tchaikowsky's first ballet. In 1875 he had been asked to compose music for *The Swan Lake*, for the Imperial Opera in Moscow. This ballet was, in fact, eventually performed at a less important theatre and the music was not especially noticed. After Tchaikowsky's

Swan Lake Ballet

death, however, it enjoyed great fame. This was partly due to the immense success of *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), of which, again, the music is quite familiar.

In some ways this music, perhaps, is too familiar, for too often we allow indifferent performances to destroy our finer appreciation. English-speaking people on the whole are not very good at 'letting themselves go'; when we try we so frequently seem very self-conscious. But Tchaikowky's ballet music—and indeed all his other music—does ask us to so that we may enjoy the qualities which he first brought to this form of music. In 1921 Diaghilew was presenting *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Alhambra Theatre in London. Strawinsky was intensely interested. He had scored two of the items which had been left unscored by the composer and omitted from the first performances. A letter which Strawinsky wrote to Diaghilew at that time shows how much he felt he, as a modern musician, owed to Tchaikowsky.

'The convincing example of Tchaikowsky's great creative power is, beyond all doubt, the ballet of *The Sleeping Beauty*. This cultured man, with his knowledge of folk-song and of old French music, had no need to engage in archaeological research in order to present the age of Louis XIV; he re-created the character of the period by his musical language, preferring involuntary but living anachronisms to conscious and laboured *pasticcio*; a virtue that appertains only to great creative minds. I have just read again the score of this ballet. . . . I have spent some days of intense pleasure in finding therein again and again . . . freshness, inventiveness, ingenuity and vigour.'

'What a lot of hard words!' said Susan when she read

this. Her father lent her a nice dictionary (with pictures) and that kept her quiet!

In his ballets, Tchaikowsky showed the most perfect, unaffected expression of his real affection for people. He was able to take little things seriously, but not too seriously. He resented it when people suggested that ballet music was, necessarily, poor stuff. He pointed to the French music of Delibes and contrasted it with the dull, lifeless German music which so many of his contemporaries respected—because it was 'correct'.

Susan, incidentally, tells me that she is thought very clever at school because her harmony is 'correct'. She will soon be able to become an L.R.A.M., they say. Mercifully the harmony exercises will never be heard. They are only meant to be looked at.

Tchaikowsky, on the other hand, thought it desirable that music should be heard as well as seen.

There are occasions, of course, when, having heard music by him, your ear drums seem to have experienced a cannonade. The *1812 Overture*, for instance, for pomp and circumstance leaves poor Elgar playing a mouth organ two streets away. If you think (which these days you don't) war grand, heroic, glorious, full of pageantry and improved by judicious introduction of suitable grand, heroic and glorious national hymns, here is the very work. Russian and French anthems meet in solemn tournament, the former wins. To emphasise the victory brass bands join the orchestra.

If you had been lucky enough to have been at the first performance of this overture, on August 8th 1882, at the consecration of the cathedral in Moscow, which itself commemorated the disaster to Napoleon of sixty years before,

you would have heard artillery putting in—intentionally—some extra percussion effects.

The overture ends *fff*. This is modest, for a short while before the end the mark is *ffff*. In another work we find, in contrast, *ppppp*. Cousin Arthur says he thought that *ff* meant 'most loud' and *pp* 'most soft' and that he cannot see why anyone should need four of one and five of the other. He says it must be something to do with Russia.

And so, in fact, it is. Though not in the way Cousin Arthur means. Tchaikowsky, like all nineteenth century Russians, introduced into music something of the original splendour and barbaric (to the west) colour of Russian life and Russian song. We feel not only in Tchaikowsky but also in his predecessors—Borodin, Balakirew, Moussorgsky—how

the gorgeous East with richest hand,
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold.

The new effects in orchestration brought into music by the Russians—even though under the influence of two composers specially regarded in Russia, Berlioz and Liszt—thrill us today. Some of these effects have found their way west—through Dvořák, Kodály, Ravel, Walton, and many others.

Tchaikowsky wrote music after the manner of the classical Europeans. His symphonies and concertos in layout are not vastly different from those of, say, Brahms; his symphonic poems and fantasias from those of Liszt. But there is always greater emphasis on the colour element.

In the first pianoforte concerto even the solo instrument sounds immeasurably richer than in the comparable concerto by Brahms. Which is not, of course, to say that the

music itself is better. Of the opening melody, given out by violins and cellos, surrounded by woodwind sustained harmony, and punctuated by huge pianoforte chords, J. D. M. Rorke writes:

'I lived at the seaside then, and on a day of storm, under the cliffs, I have found that mighty, mouth-filling song a thing to shout, while the great sea itself put in the crashing chords of the pianoforte part.'[1]

So can simple chords, properly placed, inspire.

Then in the last movement the folk element which provokes the pianoforte tune at the outset gives a wildness of character which is at least unusual.

There is a nervous intensity in Tchaikowsky which, though partly explained by orchestral colour, is primarily rhythmic. It does not matter whether the movement is quick or slow. There is the *andante cantabile* of the D major quartet—a favourite tune for private humming. Or the *Slavonic March*, composed in 1877 for a charity concert for the benefit of wounded soldiers. Or the last movement of the Violin Concerto. Or the finale of the String Serenade.

In all these movements there is a direct reference to folk-song idiom.

Unlike some of his contemporaries Tchaikowsky preferred to admit Russian idiom into a musical style which was, broadly speaking, universally used and understood. This partially explains his great popularity. His is a language which we all speak—but its dialect is distinctive.

Nationalism was the main thought of many nineteenth-century artists and philosophers. It did not prove an unmixed blessing. Fortunately there were those who believed that

[1] *A Musical Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 63.

art knew no frontiers, that while a Russian or an Italian, or a Scotsman had his own point of view that did not prevent him from sharing it with others of other birth.

Tolstoy was a Russian. He was, none the less, a lover of humanity in general. So was the Italian Verdi. So was our own Scott. The influence of all three was international.

Tchaikowsky explained his love for the music of his own country:

'As regards the Russian element in general in my music (i.e. the instances of melody and harmony originating in folk-song), I grew up in the backwoods, saturating myself from earliest childhood with the inexplicable beauty of the characteristic traits of Russian folk-song, so that I passionately love every manifestation of the Russian spirit.'

What we grow up with, we cannot escape. The reference to the backwoods is a reminder of much travel in youth, for Tchaikowsky's father was an inspector of mines. But, early, there were influences to suggest ideas which were not entirely Russian. There was a French governess, who was interested in encouraging her charge to read books. Throughout his life there was a large respect for French culture.

Then there was the music of Mozart. Particularly that of *Don Giovanni*. He wrote to his friend and benefactress Mme Nadezhda von Meck:

'You say that my worship of Mozart is quite contrary to my musical nature. But perhaps it is just because, being a child of my day [a restless, relentless age to many who lived then] I feel broken and spiritually out of joint, that I find consolation and rest in Mozart's music. . . .'

Mozart, to Tchaikowsky, was the supreme musician. One

who could triumph over this world, over his own misfortunes, and write works which might appear fitting in the next world. One work, not perhaps a particularly 'good' one (although I suspect you will enjoy it) which notes this interest in Mozart is, appropriately, named *Mozartiana*. This is a set of pieces chosen from Mozart and orchestrated by Tchaikowsky.

When in Italy in 1880 Tchaikowsky repaid an old debt. He made a vigorous and warmly written *Capriccio* on some Italian tunes which he collected. Twenty years before he had been carried away in the theatre at St Petersburg (Leningrad) by Italian opera.

One cannot write opera without seeing and hearing it. That Tchaikowsky became a great Russian opera composer was because he was brought up on Italian opera.

I am afraid that all that you are likely to hear of his operas are one or two bits and pieces—dances from *Eugen Onegin*, Tatyana's letter song from the same work, Joan of Arc's farewell from *The Maid of Orleans*. *Pique Dame* has, however, been produced at Covent Garden since the war, and at Sadler's Wells before it. The texts of his operas are an additional memorial of a period of Russian greatness. *Vakula the Smith* was based on a story by Gogol, *Eugen Onegin* on one by Pushkin.

When hearing the symphonies one is often inclined to *see* the music, as though it were ballet or opera with the dancers and the actors invisible. Throughout his life Tchaikowsky consciously tried to depict positive ideas in music. Not music for music's sake, but music for the sake of expressing thoughts about life. 'I should be sorry', he wrote 'if symphonies that mean nothing should flow from my pen.'

We may be forgiven if the music conjures up visions of —well, what you will.

If I were you I would have a rest from large works. Try the smaller and often extremely poetic miniatures. Susan thought that she learned the piano in order to play sonatas by Beethoven which she couldn't play, and fugues by Bach, which she didn't (as yet) see much point in. We really learn the piano so that we may play pieces by composers we like—pieces which we can get to know more intimately than the big things.

There are a number of small pieces by Tchaikowsky and his *Children's Album* may be compared with that of Schumann, or with the children's pieces of Mendelssohn. There was a homeliness about much nineteenth century music which we have lost. It is a quality we might revive. Then look too at Tchaikowsky's sixteen *Songs for Children*.

Dickens was a great artist—a very great artist—who would appear to have distinguished himself by having, in the eyes of ruthless critics, bad taste. His novels poured out like life itself. Therefore they are true to life. Critics of Tchaikowsky are also sometimes condescending. They may not always be right. But, whether or not, Tchaikowsky like Dickens gives us something of reality. And sometimes he gets away—to fairyland.

Did all this come from peace and contentment? Far from it. Tchaikowsky combined with genius a nervous sensibility which unfitted him for the hurly-burly of life. He would today have been handed to a psychiatrist. Then, probably, there would have been no music.

For Tchaikowsky lived his real life within his music. Of loneliness, to which we have referred in the case of Schubert,

he had his fill. He found in Mme von Meck someone who seemed to understand him. In 1876 she, by a generous allowance, had freed him from teaching at the Moscow Conservatoire. She gave to him confidence in himself. A sentence from one of his letters sums up the joy to the individual artist of receiving understanding:

'If you only knew how pleasing and consoling it is to a musician when he knows that there is one soul which feels so strongly and deeply all that he himself felt when he was planning and writing his work.'

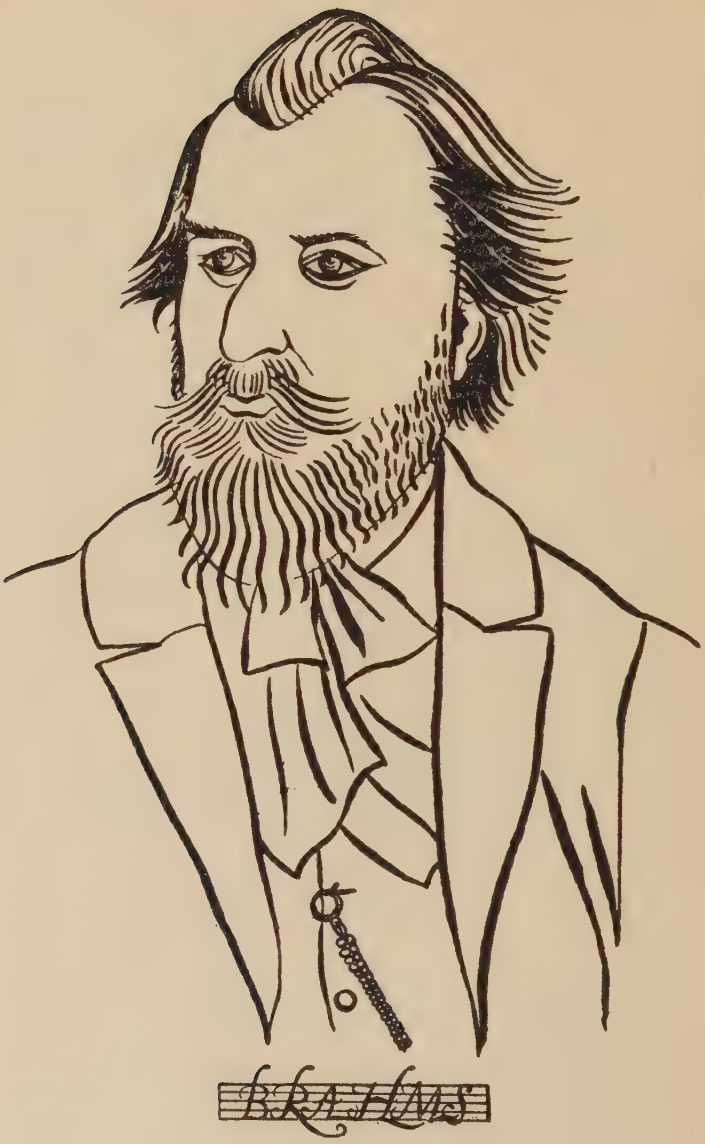
III: *TCHAIKOWSKY*

Works to perform

Album for the young (pianoforte)	Augener
Ballets:	
Casse-noisette (arr. 2 pianofortes)	Boosey and Hawkes
Swan Lake, The (arr. pianoforte)	" " "
Symphony in E minor, No. 5 (arr. pianoforte)	Reeves
Twelve Songs	Schirmer
When Jesus Christ was yet a child (S.A.T.B.)	O.U.P.

Works to hear

Concerto for pianoforte and orchestra in B flat minor	Columbia LX 681/4
Concerto for violin and orchestra in D major	HMV DB 3159/62
Eugen Onegin (Polonaise and Waltz)	Decca K 1301
Overture—1812	HMV C 3617/8
Quartet for Strings in D major (Andante cantabile)	HMV DA 1461
Symphony in F minor (No. 4)	Columbia DX 1096/100


BRAHMS

CHAPTER FOUR

BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

I REMEMBER THAT A portrait of Brahms, which must have been one of the first of a musician that I ever saw, impressed me mightily. He had a beard. Therefore, I argued, he must belong to the same class as Ruskin, Dickens, Dr W. G. Grace, and various mayors and aldermen who also flourished at the same time—during the reign of Queen Victoria. They all had beards, and they were all supposed to be 'great'.

The dates underneath the portrait showed that Brahms was dead. That, of course, made him still more great.

It was a long time before I realised that greatness does not entirely depend upon people being dead. Even in art—although many people still prefer to support the (sometimes inferior) dead rather than the living, not realising that the latter have to live long enough to produce something that will be respected when they are dead. There is a good cautionary tale, which you must read one day—'Alive, alive oh!' by Sir Osbert Sitwell.

What with deadness, a beard and German nationality Brahms appeared to be thoroughly outstanding. Because he was so outstanding he also appeared to be stand-offish.

'The first symphony in C minor, hailed by many as in the line of Beethoven, was first performed at Carlsruhe on November 4th, 1876. A year later the second symphony, in D major, appeared. The third and fourth, each revealing new

and deeper aspects of the master, belonged to the years 1883 and 1885.'

This sort of statement conjures up expensive seats in a concert hall (or an obliging announcer marking time before the start of a broadcast), a 'great' orchestra, which generally comes from some other city or town than one's own, a highly publicised conductor and a lot of people who talk loudly in the interval, and sometimes during the concert. Symphonies, symphony concerts, symphony orchestras: how remote they seem from us who can just manage a waltz, or an intermezzo, or an easy song accompaniment on the piano at home!

Everything conspires to make music which is regarded as 'great' aloof.

Yet that is exactly what the best music never is. To real music lovers music which is really appreciated becomes a private possession. We lock up our favourite music, or poetry, or literature within ourselves. We think of it from time to time.

Now Brahms is among the most homely of composers. The waltzes, the intermezzos, like much of the piano music of Mendelssohn, seem to be part of the furnishing of a pleasant room. They belong to winter evenings, to warm firelight, a shaded lamp over the piano in the corner of the room. 'Play that again', says Susan's father, as she arrives—successfully—at the end of the waltz in A flat. Susan's father is an ordinary sort of person who 'knows what he likes'. He likes Brahms's waltzes. Well, there is nothing wrong in liking music!

'The Cradle Song', 'The Blacksmith', 'The Little Sandman', 'In Poland Stands a House'; all these—and for the

enterprising many more—belong to the normal English school repertoire. And if teachers didn't like them they wouldn't teach them! Music of this nature has an affectionate quality, which makes us like both music and the particular composer. Many of these songs come from the affectionate side of Brahms's character. The *Children's Songs* (dated 1858) were written for the children of Robert and Clara Schumann, who both made great efforts to encourage Brahms when he was not very well known. The 'Cradle Song' (teachers may generally be encouraged to teach Brahms's songs more rhythmically) was also written for some child friends—Arthur and Bertha Faber of Vienna.

The 'Cradle Song' has another characteristic, which helps to explain why so many of Brahms' tunes sound so tuneful. It is a folk-song, which Brahms has arranged so beautifully that it sounds always new and always fresh, though always familiar.

As a nineteenth-century composer Brahms could not escape the influence of folk-song, any more than could Tchaikowsky, or Grieg, or Dvořák. He never, however, made a fetish of folk music, preferring that some of the character of his country's music should flow naturally into the sort of music that he wanted to write. Brahms set some sixty German folk melodies (and used the words of fifty-six more). All of them he set because he loved their music. None of them, in his music, shriek 'This is German. This is great. This is greater than anything which comes from any other country!'

Take for instance 'The Vain Suit'. This happens to be a Lower Rhine folk-song, taken from Kretschmer's *Deutsche Volkslieder*—a collection which also attracted Robert Schumann. But when we hear 'The Vain Suit' we are not

concerned with the history nor the nationality of the music. All we know is that this is entertaining, a comic story in four stanzas, and that Brahms's skill in the accompaniment adds considerably to the point of the story. A singer who fails to make this song amusing has failed. A singer who fails to make it sound beautiful has also failed. From this you may begin to see how exacting the art of singing is.

From the simpler songs—not less beautiful because they are simple—we may pass to other works, in which we may take part. There are the *Liebeslieder* (*Love Songs*) and their successors the *Neue Liebeslieder* (*New Love Songs*). These are waltzes, reminding us that the waltz was to the nineteenth century as the minuet to the eighteenth century.[1]

Susan and Elizabeth have had a lot of fun with the *Liebeslieder* waltzes. They play the piano very nicely when they play solos; but when you hear them duetting (so long as they are not arguing about who is to play the top and who the bottom) you would swear that no piano playing could ever sound so brilliant, so full, so rhythmic. You might remember this; for so many young pianists think of rhythm last instead of first.

While we are on this subject of rhythm and while we have the music of the *Liebeslieder* before us we may discover something very interesting about Brahms, something which makes some of the most advanced modern composers look back to him as a forerunner of modern technique. 'What is the rhythm of a waltz?' I asked Cousin Arthur. '*Tum*, tum, tum; *tum*, tum, tum; . . .' he thundered, and then whistled his way through the *Blue Danube*. 'How many beats in a bar', I went on. 'Three, of course.' Excellent, I thought. Then

[1] c.f. Chopin, Berlioz, Tchaikowsky.

I asked him if he enjoyed Brahms. Naturally he did, because Brahms was an 'easy composer' to listen to.

I turned the pages of my book on the piano desk and picked out the opening tune of the second of the *Liebeslieder*. How many beats, I asked. That caught him. For the time signature certainly says 3/4 and we would expect—*tum*, tum, tum. But what we *hear* in the first two bars is *TUM*, tum, *Tum*, tum; *Tum*, tum. A little arithmetic will help at this point. Six beats may be set out

1 2 3 4 5 6.

Divided into two equal bars we would have

1 2 3 : 1 2 3.

But Brahms says why not

1 2 3 4 : 1 2?

And why not? For these waltzes are not to be danced to but to be heard as music, as variations, if you like, on the familiar pattern of the ball-room waltz. We are continually coming back to Shelley's remark about familiar things being shown, in poetry, and music, and art, in unfamiliar aspects. When Brahms takes his waltz patterns he continually observes this law of art. And the result is enchanting, precisely because we have to listen carefully, to keep our imagination continually at work.

What I had pointed out to Cousin Arthur took root. A week later I saw him again. 'You know,' he said, 'those Brahms duets.' I did. 'I have been playing them.' That, I thought was strange, for he is not really good enough to play four-handed music with two hands. However, he explained. He had played all the *tunes*. But he did know the music. 'No. 8,' he said, 'has the most lovely cross rhythm. The song is really rather dreamy and where old Brahms puts

a four-beat rhythm against a three it sounds just as though the clock has stopped and we are to enjoy our dreams for ever.' He had noticed something else. 'And this isn't all. The harmony drifts in and out of all sorts of unusual keys, which sounds dreamier than ever.' And then we talked about the one in which the pianists and singers always get muddled the first time through—No. 13, all about swallows. So, when we use our eyes and ears, old music often doesn't turn out to be so very old after all. These pieces are piano duets—a characteristic occupation of our great-grandparents. But voices are interwoven, most beautifully, with the piano parts.

By way of change there are the songs for female voices, two horns and harp. There are the *Marienlieder* (*Songs of Mary*). These latter, based either on folk-song or chorale patterns, are as simple as can be, but touched with a tenderness that we notice as soon as we start to sing them.

None of them are 'great' works, but as introductory to 'great' works they cannot be surpassed. In them, too, we may see, living again, the sociable singers, with whom Brahms was acquainted, who sang for no other reason than that they liked singing.

The life story of Johannes Brahms is, for the biographer, almost the dullest on record. He was born in Hamburg, he lived mostly in Vienna and died there. He was highly respectable—which is a disappointment to those who feel that art is improved when the artist defies normal behaviour. He never married, nor ever really looked like marrying. There is nothing to remember about his life; although if I say that his father played the double bass in the theatre

at Hamburg (which is true) I am quite certain you will remember that.

As a matter of fact that explains a good deal. Brahms was brought up in a musical atmosphere—music being a usual and not an unusual accomplishment. He learnt to play the piano and to compose in Hamburg.

As a young man he made useful friends. In 1853 he accompanied the recitals of a gipsy violinist—Edward Remenyi. Remenyi added to Brahms's love for classical music, on which he—like you—was mainly brought up, an enthusiasm for gipsy music[1] and for the national dances of Hungary. Later on the *Zigeunerlieder* (*Gipsy Songs*) and Hungarian Rhapsodies brought this influence into prominence.

Remenyi introduced Brahms to Joachim, the greatest violinist of that age. Joachim introduced Brahms to Liszt and to Schumann.

Robert Schumann was not only a composer, but a writer. He was an influential critic. What he wrote in 1853, was therefore, a decisive point in Brahms's career. Schumann listed a number of composers whose ideas opened up new vistas, so that '. . . it seemed that under these circumstances there inevitably must appear a musician called to give expression to his time in ideal fashion: a musician who would reveal his mastery not in gradual evolution, but like Athene would spring fully armed from Zeus's head. And such a one *has* appeared; a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes have stood watch. His name is *Johannes Brahms*——Sitting at the piano he began to disclose wonderful regions

[1] A modern book of great interest on this subject is *Raggle-Taggle* by Walter Starkie.

to us. We were drawn into even more enchanting spheres. Besides, he is a player of genius who can make of the piano an orchestra of lamenting and loudly jubilant voices. There were sonatas, veiled symphonies rather; songs, the poetry of which would be understood even without words, although a profound vocal melody runs through them all——'.

You will find Schumann's literary style somewhat overpowering. For you (and for me, too) it is too 'gushing'. That is one difference between his point of view and ours. He, and his contemporaries, liked mysteries. We don't believe in them. They were Romantic. We are not.

That is to say they thought they were, and we think we are not. In truth we are just as romantic. We enjoy improbable stories. We escape into regions in which we do not normally live. We may, indeed, go back to Brahms and prefer him to—well, almost any modern composer.

Schumann reminds us, however, of qualities which were newly explored a hundred years ago. The piano appeared as a small version of the orchestra, rich in colour, in tonal variety, and able to sing.

We may listen to the Ballade in G Minor (Op. 118), to the first of the three intermezzos (Op. 117), to the first piano sonata in C, to the sets of variations on themes by Handel and Paganini, to realize that we can listen more appreciatively if we feel behind the nature of the piano that of the orchestra. If, as we play, we also bear this in mind then our playing will become more sensitive, more expressive.

The accompaniments to the songs (and here they differ from those of Schubert, coming nearer to those of Wagner and Wolf) are similarly suggestive. 'To an Aeolian Harp', for instance, has harp and high woodwind behind its magic,

'Sapphic Ode', rich string tone. The key changes in 'The Night' call for something less mechanical, more dissolving than the piano. Yet, in general, Brahms's piano music still sounds right for the piano—but a piano (and pianist) of greater virtues than are common.

In his own day Brahms's compositions were not always approved. His first piano concerto in D minor was thought improper as a concerto. It did not show off enough. It was too severe, too tragic on one hand, too classical on the other. Yet its sternness and its grace—in the *adagio*—represent qualities which had been largely absent from this type of music since Beethoven. The audience in Leipzig in 1859 showed its feelings: 'At first they were silent, and when finally one or two members wanted to applaud they were drowned in hisses'. So was modern music received in 1859.

Schumann's 'enchanting spheres' still enchant. Notice how Brahms goes from one place to another—from the familiar to the unfamiliar. From the first to the second, or the seventh to the eighth, of the variations on the 'St Anthony' chorale. In both cases major gives way to minor. In no case, however, are we merely concerned with the technique of music. It is not *how* the key is changed but *why*.

From the original chorale, rustically delivered in Haydn's open air orchestration, Brahms seems to consider all the people who might have known the melody. Some, as in the eighth variation, he saw as ghostly visions. No composer can evoke ghostliness, uncertainty, more than Brahms in minor tonality.

A composer must not only know about what keys to use, but when to use them. Buy a vocal score of the *Song of Destiny*. E flat, C minor, and C major: each key is a vision

—of beauty, of doubt, of peace and security. The text is of the passage of man's soul. Brahms follows the soul's career in music, 'the poetry of which', to quote Schumann again, 'would be understood even without the words'.

The 'development section' (i.e. the middle) of the first movement of the fourth symphony moves, restless, from key to key. In this symphony Brahms expresses in music thoughts similar to those expressed in poetry by Matthew Arnold.

This tract which the river of Time
Now flows through with us, is the plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confus'd as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

Often Brahms takes us that way. But, equally often, he catches the other vision of Matthew Arnold:

Haply, the River of Time

. . . . . .

May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

Listen to the slow movement of the third symphony, the slow movement of the *Violin Concerto*, the fourth movement of the *Requiem*.

'A classical composer', said some rudely, as they looked at Brahms from Wagner who appeared to them the chief musician of the age. 'A romantic', cried Schumann. People

argued about Brahms—which he disliked—but never decided to which class he belonged.

To the listener such argument is fruitless. To make himself *felt* a composer must be romantic; to make himself *understood* he must be classical.

Brahms wrote symphonies which in shape recalled Beethoven, even Mozart, but which had the feeling of his songs. His chamber music, similarly, followed tradition in many formal ways but—listen to the slow movement of the B flat quartet, particularly where the cello sings chromatically—in colour it was individual.

The chamber music—for which, as for the *Violin Concerto*, Joachim is to be thanked, both for his advice to the composer in technical matters and for his playing—is magnificent. If for nothing else then for the manner in which the instruments are used.

If string quartets and quintets are off your beat try to hear the two clarinet sonatas—the finest ever written—which were composed for a famous clarinettist—Richard Mühlfeld. Or the trio for violin, horn and pianoforte.

I said that my first impression of Brahms was of respectability. Like the other people I mentioned in the portrait gallery with him he sometimes (in his music) appears respectable. Like them also, however, he suggests that convention is not enough: that we must all have our private worlds of humour, of beauty, of tenderness.

We should try to remember—in poetry and music to memorise—one piece by artists as great as Brahms. And that piece should be unique—something that no one else could have written.

From Brahms my movement is the fifth in the *Requiem*

—a movement which shows the sublimity of his singing gift, the depth of his love.

I heard this movement not long ago sung by a young Scottish soprano. She sang like a great singer. So well, so unaffectedly, so purely, that the presence of the singer was forgotten.[1] The music alone was there—the melody echoed in the instrumental and choral background—and nothing was between Brahms and the audience.

This movement was added to the *Requiem* after the death of Brahms's mother. It is almost the only autobiographical passage in his works. It is not Brahms's mother who is commemorated—but all mothers. That is where we may begin to see what true greatness is. The ability to express what is true not of one but of all.

[1] The person of the singer oughtn't to be forgotten. Her name is Grace Mackintosh, of Perth, and I doubt that I shall hear this work sung so perfectly again. Scottish readers please note.

IV: *BRAHMS*

Works to perform

Children's Songs	Curwen
Four Songs for Female Voices, 2 horns and harp (arr. pianoforte)	Novello
Gipsy Songs (Zigeunerlieder) for mixed voices (or arr. female voices) and pianoforte	O.U.P.
Symphony in C minor (No. 1) arr. pianoforte duet	Schirmer
Variations on a theme of Haydn for two pianofortes	Breitkopf and Härtel
Waltzes (pianoforte)	Augener

Works to hear

Academic Festival Overture	Decca K 1726
Concerto in D for violin and orchestra	Decca AK 2055/9
Quintet in B minor for clarinet and strings	HMV DB 3383/6
Song of Destiny, A (chorus and orchestra)	(No complete recordings)
Songs (available in school editions)	
Symphony in D (No. 2)	Columbia LX 515/9

MENDELSSOHN

CHAPTER FIVE

MENDELSSOHN

(1809-1847)

In the case of Schubert we discovered how light and shade come into music as into painting. We listen often to the interplay of chords and keys and do not, necessarily, consider what the music is supposed to be about. If about anything at all. When we look at paintings, whether by old painters—like my favourite Flemings—or by newer artists, say Van Gogh, we may also look less at the subject represented (which is not so very important) than at the pattern made by the varied masses of colour.

I always find that when I hear the music of Mendelssohn I feel better able to look at paintings with understanding. Or, when I look at some paintings, I feel that I can experience Mendelssohn's genius more fully.

This, perhaps, is not surprising; for Mendelssohn was an accomplished and charming painter. His music, more than almost any other music (unless we except our Mr Britten, whose genius is not dissimilar), has the quality of fine, careful and attractive painting. This was a quality noted and approved by Wagner, who learnt from the method.

If you listen to the *Melusina* overture, to the first part of the *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* overture, to the opening of the *Hebrides* overture, to the first movement of the 'Italian' and the scherzo of the 'Scotch' symphonies, to the whole of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, you will understand

what I mean. To say that Mendelssohn was skilful in orchestration is an inadequate expression of the fact that his colour sense is so strong that we may stretch our hands and almost feel the texture of his colours.

This may also be true of other composers. Mendelssohn, however, is rather rare in that he uses few colours. A single oboe in accompaniment of the boy who is sent by the prophet Elijah to see if the rain is coming; the same oboe in the air 'But the mountains shall depart'; a fluttering, winged flute in the scherzo to the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* single strands of woodwind tone, intertwined, in *Melusina;* the contrasting brilliance of string and wind families at the beginning of the 'Italian' symphony: all these are instances of beauty accomplished by extreme simplicity.

There is another characteristic of Mendelssohn which is evident as soon as we think of what we know. Speed. Mendelssohn's music at its best flits by—noiselessly (if you see what I mean) and without fuss. The scherzo is, as his father noted when he advised him to attempt other fields of music than the fairy, his favourite form. His scherzos are, in fact, the most numerous and varied in music. But these fast movements do not depend upon a conductor beating very quickly. They sound speedy (even if you play at them half speed) because each note is in exactly the right place.

In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture the scene is set by slow woodwind chords (in E major). Then the upper strings fly away, in E minor, and in quavers. The effect is magical. Mendelssohn pricks the imagination by the effect of his airy sounds. We don't have to think of quickness. We know it. A similar, and similarly beautiful, effect is achieved by Coleridge in *Christabel*:

There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Coleridge, of course, is describing stillness. But he does it by giving the contrast of movement. As in the case of Mendelssohn we are concerned not so much with the scene as with the sense of brightly illuminated movement.

We may as well notice that Coleridge and Mendelssohn overlapped: Coleridge (1772-1834); Mendelssohn (1809-1847). They are both too great to be labelled. They were, however, both deeply conscious of the urge of the Romantic movement towards intense emotional expression.

Quickness seems the right word to apply to Mendelssohn in every way. He was a quick scholar, a witty conversationalist, an indefatigable letter writer and sketcher, a most distinguished pianist and conductor, and a busy public servant with many administrative duties. Mendelssohn was quite one of the busiest men in the nineteenth century. He conducted many Festivals, including the famous Festival of the Lower Rhine; directed the concerts in Leipzig, known, by the name of the hall in which they were held, as the Gewandhaus (Cloth Hall) concerts; superintended the royal music in Berlin; was the Director of the Leipzig Conservatorium (School of Music); there were other duties too.

Mendelssohn died in his thirty-eighth year. That is an age at which many composers begin their effective careers.

But Mendelssohn was a remarkable boy—and a fortunate boy. He was the grandson of a great German-Jewish philosopher—Moses Mendelssohn and the son of a wealthy

banker. Abraham, the banker, had firm ideas about many things. I always think that he must have been rather a nuisance to his colleagues on the Berlin City Council! With regard to his children—there were, besides Felix, Fanny, Paul and Rebecca—Abraham believed in hard work. Lessons before breakfast, knowledge of both ancient and modern languages, geography, art, religion, literature, mathematics. music (which was supposed to be hobby) both theoretical and practical.

On Sunday mornings there were concerts at home. Sometimes these concerts were varied by readings from favourite authors or by dramatic exhibitions.

The childhood of Mendelssohn is very revealing. It may be seen that many of the ideas which he later developed were influenced by his family.

Much of Mendelssohn's music, especially his piano music and his songs, is designed for the home. It is not meant to be more than a graceful pastime. So we should not criticise the *Songs without Words* or many of the songs with words because they are slight. They are, of their kind, unsurpassable. Sometimes they are said to be ladylike. That, as a matter of fact, is a compliment.

If you are a young lady, wouldn't you have been pleased to have had the fourth book of the *Songs without Words*? These were dedicated to the sprightly Sophie Horsley, one of an artistic and musical family who lived at Kensington, and who were very friendly with Mendelssohn. With the Horsley girls—and with numerous others as well—Mendelssohn was quite outrageously flirtatious. Don't his piano pieces sometimes sound like it, full of compliments and ready affection?

Play them with that in mind. If you play them merely as exercises you will miss their point and their charm.

Music, however, had other purposes. It represented part of the greatness of Germany. Therefore Mendelssohn devoted himself to Bach, reviving the forgotten *St Matthew Passion* when all his friends told him that no one wanted to hear that sort of music; to Mozart and Haydn, whose keyboard works, at all events, were nearly forgotten; to Beethoven; to Handel.

Mendelssohn wrote fugues which recalled the spirit of Bach (note, particularly, the magnificent E minor fugue—Op. 35 No. 1), oratorios which had something of the seriousness of Bach and something of the directness of Handel, and symphonies and concertos which had Mozartian clarity and, occasionally, Mozartian sweetness. The string quartets—most improperly ignored—reveal the lines of Beethoven, softened. Mendelssohn showed respect for his great predecessors (his grandfather advocated that one should know the classics), but did not allow this to interfere with his respect for himself.

Music as necessary to the theatre was a subject of early interest for, as we have noticed, there were home-made dramatic performances. A *Midsummer Night's Dream* was an early favourite. Towards the end of her life Mendelssohn's sister Fanny wrote of 'how we had all at different ages gone through the whole of the parts from Peas-Blossom to Hermia and Helena'.

Mendelssohn wrote the overture when he was seventeen —at the same age he wrote his astonishing octet for strings. In 1843 he was commissioned by the King of Prussia to write more incidental music for the play—Scherzo, Wedding

Midsummer Night's Dream

March, Funeral March (an amusing little piece for clarinet and drum and thoroughly mock-tragic and theatrical), Nocturne were, therefore, added. Please remember that the Wedding March was not composed for either church or organ. It is a blaze of theatrical colour and uses three trumpets with great glory.

'But,' continued Fanny, 'we really were brought up on the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; and Felix especially had made it his own, almost recreating the characters which had sprung from Shakespeare's exhaustless genius.'

There were those among the first audience in Berlin who had curious ideas. 'What a pity,' said one to the composer, 'that you have wasted your beautiful music on such a stupid play.' Another remarked that Shakespeare had merely translated the play into English.

Mendelssohn wrote, in his Berlin days, a good deal of incidental music for plays. He never, however, wrote the opera which he always hoped to write.

For his parents' silver wedding he wrote a little operetta —*Son and Stranger*. This is the title of the English version. The German title properly translated is 'Coming home from abroad'. Nobody performs it these days. This is a pity for it is a work of great charm and sparkling with delicious tunes. It is performable by amateur societies and is to be recommended to them. It will have been noticed that Mendelssohn frequently wrote music because other people wanted it, or because there was an occasion for which music was required. This qualifies him, in one sense, as a classical composer. For classical composers regarded themselves, generally, as craftsmen, able to provide a new piece of music whenever asked to do so.

In many ways besides Mendelssohn shows an understanding of classical values. His symphonies sound so clear, so tuneful (if we may dare to use a naughty word which people who can't make tunes detest), so balanced. 'Hardly a care in the world', said Susan's mother when she heard the 'Italian' symphony the other day.

Susan complained that her mother was old fashioned. Secretly she loved the 'Italian' symphony but one of her friends had told her that really great music ought to be pretty miserable. 'Look at Schönberg—.' As I happened to be there I refused to *look at* Schönberg and suggested a piano duet run through the 'Italian'.

'It is cheerful isn't it?' I said. 'Yes'. 'And why not? After all if Mr Mendelssohn happened to have toothache there was no need for him to write nasty chords.'

Three of Mendelssohn's symphonies are excellent points for starting to explore symphonic music in general. They have enough of a title to encourage the listener who thinks that music must be about something or other.

In fact the 'Italian' symphony reminds us that Mendelssohn enjoyed a holiday in Italy in 1830-31. If you like to think that it is a warm and sunny symphony then you may, but if you want a guide to Rome then you must look for it in Mendelssohn's letters.

These letters (which were published in two volumes many years ago in a translation by Lady Wallace) are enchanting. Here we notice the same eye for detail that we also notice in Mendelssohn's scores, and just as in the latter there are never too many notes so in the former there are never too many words. Here is a passage from a letter home written on June 6, 1831:

'Now however I am once more in old Rome, where life is very different [from Naples]. There are processions daily, for last week was the Corpus Domini; and just as I left the city during the celebration of the week following the Holy Week, I now return after the Corpus Christi to find them engaged in the same way. It made a singular impression on me to see that the streets had in the interim assumed such an aspect of summer; on all sides booths with lemons and iced water, the people in light dresses, the windows open, and the *jalousies* [Venetian blinds] closed. You sit at the doors of coffee-houses, and eat *gelato* [ice cream!] in quantities; the Corso swarms with equipages, for people no longer walk much, and though in reality I miss no dear friends or relatives, yet I felt quite moved when I once saw the Piazza di Spagna, and the familiar names written up on the corners of the streets. I shall stay here for about a week, and then proceed northwards.'

So much for Rome. Let us too go northwards.

The 'Scotch' symphony is in the key of A minor. You are, again, at liberty to think. You may think of Edinburgh Castle or Arthur's Seat on a cloudy day. You may, of course never have seen either. If you haven't then read Mendelssohn's letters on Scotland.

We may look at one which was written in the lounge of a hotel in Glasgow on an August day in 1829 and recalled the day on which Mendelssohn visited Fingal's Cave.

'. . . the Atlantic . . . stretched its thousand feelers more and more roughly, twirling us about like anything. The ship-household kept its breakfast almost for itself, few people on board being able to manage their cups and

saucers, ladies as a rule fell down like flies, and one or the other gentlemen followed their example; I only wish my travelling fellow-sufferer had not been among them, but he is on better terms with the sea as a musician than as an individual or a stomach; two beautiful cold daughters of a Hebrides aristocrat, at whom Felix may storm, quietly continued sitting on deck, and did not even care much for the sea-sickness of their own mother. Also there sat placidly by the steam-engine, warming herself in the cold wind, a woman of two-and-eighty. That woman has six times touched me and seven times irritated me. She wanted to see Staffa before her end. Staffa, with its strange basalt pillars and caverns, is in all picture books. We were put out in boats and lifted by the hissing sea up the pillar stumps to the celebrated Fingal's Cave. A greener roar of waves surely never rushed into a stranger cavern—its many pillars making it look like the inside of an immense organ, black and resounding, and absolutely without purpose, and quite alone, the wide grey sea within and without. There the old woman scrambled about laboriously, close to the water: she wanted to see the cave of Staffa before her end, and she saw it. We returned in the little boat to our steamer, to that unpleasant steam-smell.'

It was at this time that an overture was thought out, and the most of a symphony; but the symphony was not completed for another thirteen years. It was dedicated to Queen Victoria, whose respect for the composer was very great.

Personally I prefer the 'Scotch' to the 'Italian' symphony. Perhaps this is because the last movement is stronger, even sterner, than the last movement of the other. It has a

masculine quality which many people overlook in Mendelssohn. As for the scherzo it is a thoroughbred among scherzos. The way in which the first tune tumbles about among the woodwind, deftly, acrobatically, is a great joy. The cheeky middle bit (which comes again towards the end), with scales hopping from foot to foot, is no less engaging.

Another of Mendelssohn's symphonies is called the 'Reformation'. This, which never achieved much popularity because it was thought too severe in Mendelssohn's lifetime, is extremely interesting, if less immediately attractive than the 'Italian' and the 'Scotch'. It was designed in celebration of the third centenary of the Reformation. The last movement is a set of variations on Luther's great hymn which we know as 'A safe stronghold our God is still'. Listen to it (if you can) and you will see how Mendelssohn colours the melody majestically. Listen also to some of the movements in the organ sonatas—which, when Mendelssohn played them himself, made a great impression on those who heard them—based on chorales. You will discover another side of Mendelssohn.

The first movement of the 'Reformation' symphony contains the 'Dresden Amen', an item which Wagner was also pleased to employ to suggest a church atmosphere in *Parsifal*. The slow movement is one of the best which Mendelssohn wrote: quite simple and never sentimental.

I remember conducting this symphony in a church in honour of that church's centenary. It was a case of the right music in the right place—and at the right time.

Mendelssohn wrote a great deal of what we call 'religious music'. As a matter of fact music cannot be divided into

groups, like recruits going into the army. Words may, by association, give the impression that the music attached to the words is 'sacred'. But it isn't. It is just—music.

Sooner or later, however, your aunt will bring you a ticket for *Elijah* or *The Hymn of Praise*, or, less probably, *St Paul*. She will tell you that the music is SACRED and that the composer was a GREAT COMPOSER, and—unlike most of the others—a GOOD COMPOSER. If your aunt doesn't tell you that somebody else's will. Don't argue. Listen to the music. If you are lucky and attend a good performance it will impress you.

Unfortunately there is a tendency for people to sing GOOD music badly on the grounds that the more the rhythm is destroyed the better God will be pleased.

However that may be Dr Mendelssohn (a German university made him a Doctor of Philosophy), as he was when he wrote *Elijah*, hated his music being mauled. He even sent metronomes to the English choirmasters preparing *Elijah*.

Elijah is a great oratorio, a wonderful blend of solos, choruses and orchestral music. Much of it is beautiful. Look at the choruses 'Blessed are the Men' and 'He watching over Israel' (notice how characteristically they move along). Much is dignified—'Lord God of Abraham' and 'But the Lord' for instance. Some of the oratorio pulls up the imagination with burning genius, as in 'Behold, God the Lord'. But *Elijah* never pulls us within the story, never makes *us* part of the scene. A few works in the same form do: the great works of Bach and Handel. With Mendelssohn we look and admire.

On the other hand everyone who can sing should take

part in one of Mendelssohn's oratorios. Like his symphonies they are a great introduction to other men's works, but the symphonies (or two of them at least) can compare with the greatest. For they are unique.

One other work will impress you. The *Violin Concerto*. This was composed for a great Leipzig violinist who was a great friend of the composer: Ferdinand David. The Violin Concerto has this quality, which every concerto should, but not all do, possess. It shows almost everything that the violin can do; nothing that it ought not to do. Thus it is immediately acceptable to the ear.

It is more than this. But this factor is not unimportant when we first come to music.

Mendelssohn is a composer to meet early, for his music has the quality of youth—quite often we may regret his early death in regarding the promise and great genius of the works which he wrote before he was twenty. 'If only', we say, 'he had not had to do so many other things!'

If he had not been a generally busy musician we should have had less knowledge of much old music which we would not now be without. Teaching standards would have been lower because he set high standards in the Leipzig Conservatorium. Conducting would be less meticulous. Nor would pianoforte technique be quite the same. Mendelssohn, like another great man, touched nothing which he did not adorn.

After an early affection, interest in Mendelssohn goes. If we are lucky it returns and we discover the songs which we had never known to have existed, the chamber music which we had never heard. There is, in fact, not very much which we do know.

It is not surprising that when Cécile Mendelssohn asked her husband on his deathbed whether he was tired, he answered:

'Yes I am tired, desperately tired.'

Those were the last words he spoke.

V: *MENDELSSOHN*

Works to perform

Christmas pieces	Augener
Overture—The Hebrides (arr. pianoforte solo)	Augener
Songs (with words)	Novello
Songs Without Words	Associated Board
Trio in C minor (violin, cello and pianoforte)	Augener and Schirmer
Symphony in D (The Reformation) arr. pianoforte solo	Litolff

Works to hear

Concerto in E minor for violin and orchestra	HMV DB 6956/8
Elijah—oratorio	Columbia DX 1408/23
Midsummer Night's Dream, A (overture and incidental music)	HMV DB 6820/1
Overture	Decca K 1768-9
(Nocturne, scherzo, intermezzo	(No complete recording)
Octet for Strings (Scherzo)	Columbia LX 924.
Six Sonatas for Organ	(No complete recording)
Symphony in A, No. 4 (The 'Italian')	HMV C 3758/60

HANDEL

CHAPTER SIX

HANDEL

(1685-1759)

THERE ARE TWO ways of looking at Handel. On the one hand he is an English institution—rather like Dr Johnson—famous for his appearance, for his character, for his sayings. On the other he was a hard-working musician. If we are interested in music we should regard him first as a musician. We should learn as much of his music as possible. Then we might profitably turn to 'the story of his life'.

When a musician writes music he is saying what he wants to say, what he can say in no other way. When he speaks, verbally, he is more often acting on the impulse of the moment. Handel said a number of cross things. They are frequently quoted. Frequently, however, he was cross when you (or certainly I) would be cross. A stupid singer, paid to sing the right notes, turns up to rehearsal and sings the wrong notes. The music is marked *p* and some negligent player blows *f*. People wander in to a rehearsal, chattering. Well, what would you do?

Occasional incidents offer good copy to newspaper columnists—there were plenty of people on the look-out for gossip in Handel's day just as there are in ours—but very little clue to the listener. Handel's music appeals because it is music.

Take what you know: the (celebrated) *Largo;* 'Saw you

not my Lady',[1] 'Art thou Troubled', 'See where the Golden Hearted Spring', 'Beauty lately',[1] the 'Harmonious Blacksmith' variations, 'Waft her, Angels', 'Angels ever Bright and Fair', the 'Hallelujah' chorus, 'I Know that my Redeemer Liveth', the march from *Rinaldo*.

(If you are wise you will go out and collect this music and play it over before you read on).

What tunes! How they seem to sing themselves. How friendly and companionable they are. There we have put a finger on the great Handelian quality. His music is 'great'. We needn't argue about that. But it is affectionate.

A clever man often displays his cleverness best by concealing it. Handel was clever. He never went out of his way to say so. Thus he never froze people.

Friendly; affectionate; homely; domestic. There is a connection between these words. Think what it is and then think of Handel. You have the secret then of beginning to 'understand' him. You may also feel a link with another great composer, whose friendliness is equally clear—Haydn.

There is a reason for the particular quality of Handel. He lived in an age when music was generally limited to small gatherings. There were no vast choirs, no large orchestras, no great concert halls. Everything in music in the eighteenth century was on a smaller scale than today.

The aristocrats of music were singers, many of whom were imported into England from Italy. Music, therefore, had a singing quality. Contrast the orchestral music of Handel—say the *Water Music*—with almost any modern suite. In Handel there is not a tune, whatever instrument it

[1] Songs which are thus known in school editions have had English words adapted, which are thought more respectable, refined and sholastic than the original Italian.

is played by, which you cannot sing. But if you turn to Tchaikowsky, or Elgar, or Walton, or Kodály, you will feel that rhythm and orchestral colour are more important often than melody alone. The Minuet from *Berenice*, the Air from the *Water Music*, have had words added, and have changed, without complaint, into songs which are often sung with enthusiasm by school choirs.

You will often notice strange names, in brackets, after familiar items by Handel. *Largo* or *Ombrai ma fu* (from *Serse*), 'Saw you not my Lady' (from *Tolomeo*), *Beauty lately* (from *Alcina*). What do these brackets mean?

I always believe that musical history can best be learned from looking at a page of music and by asking questions about what we don't understand.

'What does Serse mean?'

'Xerxes.'

'Then why not put Xerxes?'

'Because Serse is the Italian for Xerxes.'

'Why do you want Italian?'

'Because nearly every opera in the eighteenth century was written in Italian. This in turn was because opera developed in Italy—as a part of Renaissance activity—and became one of the exports of that country. Composers learned to write in the Italian style, whether they were German, French or what you will.'

'I thought Xerxes was a Persian king (was he?) who fought against—er—the Greeks. Why make an opera about him in the eighteenth century?'

'It was fashionable to write about the heroes of classical antiquity in those days. Anyway you can make good stories about anyone, it doesn't much matter when they lived.'

'I thought Handel wrote nothing but "religious" music. When my father talks of Handel he looks as though he wants to say his prayers.'

'Most English people do. They hate thinking of Mr Handel as a man who had to make a living out of music.'

'Money! Can a composer make money?'

'Yes, now and then. Lots don't. In Handel's day you either wrote church music and were a provincial organist, respectable and not very well off, or else you tried to get into the opera market. There was a lot of competition and only a few succeeded. Handel started very well in Italy with *Rinaldo* and then came to England where, on the whole, he did very well and wrote about twenty operas. The English, however, thought Italian a silly language, Italian singers conceited, and invented a new sort of opera—ballad opera. Listen to the *Beggar's Opera*—a novel of real life, with plenty of low comedy and tunes of the 'I know what I like' variety. After the *Beggar's Opera* it wasn't long before Handel gave up writing opera.'

'I suppose Handel's operas were not very good?'

'Why?'

'Well, I have heard of operas by Mozart, by Verdi, by Britten being performed, but never one by Handel.'

'There are several reasons for this neglect. Generally opera is performed in England because whoever promotes it is sure that he will not lose money. Then Handel's Italian texts would need translating. After that there are other difficulties. Alto and sometimes soprano parts were sung by male singers (imported from Italy). Operas of those days were less operatic than those of more recent times. The singers hardly acted at all so one went to a concert in fancy

dress rather than to a dramatic performance. Finally the music was small scale. Handel's orchestra had strings, flutes, oboes, bassoons, trumpets, horns, drums, occasionally a harp and always a harpsichord, from which the composer conducted. Except for strings the other instruments were only used rather exceptionally—to add particular points of colour—drums and trumpets for warlike scenes, flutes for bird song—and so on. To this sort of orchestra you have to listen more attentively than to a modern orchestra, where everything is underlined by masses of instruments. But, remember this, numbers of instruments have nothing to do with greatness in music. A good line drawing is far preferable to a heavy, dull clot of oil paint.'

Handel is often thought of as a fat man who wrote fat music. He wasn't (always) and didn't. His music is more often than not athletic and swift moving, light as air. Listen to the wonderful set of *concerti grossi*, to the violin sonatas, to the dances in the *Fireworks* and *Water Music*.

In these in particular—as in the operas and oratorios in general—the influence of the Italian style is seen. The concertos, for instance, are very similar to those which were composed by an early Italian acquaintance—Arcangelo Corelli (what nice names some of these Italians had!).

We are reminded that the Italians developed string music, which they based on vocal music. We note always in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a rare, singing quality.

Singing, by the way, has nothing to do with shouting. That is where our Handel is misunderstood.

I read this the other day in a local newspaper:

'On Friday night the Town Hall was packed for the Choral Society's annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*. There

VIVAT
REX

were 2,000 people present, including the Mayor and Mayoress and some of the town council who found that they could get in without paying. The town council are anxious that great music shall in time be available to all. Since the choral society has been the responsibility of the council the annual *Messiah* has gone a long way towards clearing off the deficit of the summer floral festival.

'The choir—augmented for the occasion—numbered 340 singers. It sang with great confidence, except in the quicker passages, and with tremendous force. It is to be doubted whether the choral society has ever responded so well to Mr Bangem's beat. Mr Bangem extracts the last ounce of power from his singers.

'The audience stood up for the *Hallelujah Chorus*. This tradition is a good one if only because it allows the audience to stretch its legs without appearing impolite.

'The soloists Miss Soap (soprano), Madame Slop (contralto), Mr Wobble (tenor) and Mr Basham (bass) were ably supported by Dr Diapason, the borough organist. There was an (augmented) orchestra which played excellently in spite of the fact that no rehearsal had been possible.

'The Mayor made a brief speech at the conclusion of the performance. He said how pleased he was to see so many old friends in the choir, friends who had been in the choir for fifty years and probably would be there for another fifty years (laughters and applause). He was grateful to all who had given their services—in days of economy we must spend as little as possible on music. After paying eloquent tribute to the genius of Handel the Mayor took the opportunity to remind the audience that if all present subscribed a guinea each he felt sure that the town football team would get

out of the Third Division. (Loud and prolonged applause).'

That, more or less, is where Handel has been placed in English life. *Messiah* is a very great work. No amount of bad treatment can alter its essential greatness. You may (if no one sees you) paint the walls of Carnarvon Castle pink and spot them with blue. You may think you are improving its appearance. Others may not agree with you. Nevertheless the noble proportions of the castle will remain.

Messiah is only one of a magnificent series of oratorios. Handel's life—in England—falls into two parts. During the first he wrote operas, during the second oratorios. The oratorios were similar to the operas because they set out to tell stories. They were dissimilar because the stories were based on themes from the Bible (except *Theodora* which was an independent story of a Christian martyr) and because there was no acting. They were given in one of the London theatres. Often the singers were opera singers and the orchestras recruited from the theatre players.

Wherever you look in the oratorios you will feel the influence of the theatre: the 'Dead March' from *Saul*, the 'Pastoral Symphony' from *Messiah*, the 'Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' and the 'Nightingale' chorus from *Solomon*, in a sense, tell you to look as well as listen.

Look further—'Rejoice greatly', 'Every Valley', 'Waft her Angels', or any other song which you may know will show you how Handel tried to *describe* important words in musical terms. He followed the convention of his time, for Bach does the same sort of thing, in emphasising the dramatic power of music. He rarely, however, let the imitation in for its own sake: the music sounds like music and we can enjoy it quite well wi thout wondering what every note is 'about'.

Notice how Handel can penetrate the vision with no more than one singer, a tiny orchestra of strings, and a handful of assorted crochets, quavers and semi-quavers. He had no need of vast forces.

I have just been listening to the music of *Samson*, the great oratorio composed in the same year as *Messiah*. *Samson* is a very skilful adaptation (so far as the text is concerned) from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and I always feel as I hear Handel's music how much he must have loved Milton's imagery. Incidentally (this really belongs to the English lesson) we do not always realize how indebted Milton the poet was to Milton the musician. John Milton, in youth, like Handel studied music in Italy and brought home as many new scores as he could afford and as his luggage would allow. His father was one of our great madrigal composers. How much of that story Handel knew I don't know, but I suspect enough to have aroused his interest, for Milton formed a large part of his reading.

Collect a few friends who can read at sight and turn to the first chorus in *Samson*. You will feel, as you sing, the excitement of the surging crowds in the city on a festival day. Music for Festival Year—any festival year. Now look at the picture of the heavens in 'Fix'd in His everlasting seat' and notice how the spacing of the parts and the rests are much more impressive than mere noise. And now turn to the stricter writing, for it is fugal, of 'Then shall they know'. Here is the glorification in music of Jehovah.

Now let your friends sing some of the solos. One may like to try the wavy shape of 'Thus when the sun' (the words here are taken from the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*), another the bird music of 'With plaintive notes',

a third (he may want it for a Musical Festival), 'Honour and Arms'. Having done as much as that Handel would have sent out for chocolate—to drink—and biscuits. A good example. For refreshment here allows us to browse in music and poetry, Handel and Milton, and to find how, across the years, each understands the other.

There are two points which will help you to decide whether performers understand Handel or merely play and sing him. Clarity and expression. The choruses of the oratorios, among the finest of all choral music, are often taken slower than they should be. This is to help those who cannot sing the right notes up to speed. Since they usually cannot sing the right notes slowly there is no great advantage.

As for expression—'For unto us a Son is Born'. Generally *fff*, as though Compton has scored another century.

Old music should never sound old. Great works of art are great because they always seem to have been made today —if not, Irishly, tomorrow.

Handel's music always does sound full of life. It always was fairly close to the lives of the people with whom he lived. Music in those days was much more 'useful' than is the case today. Queen Anne's birthday? An Ode from Mr Handel. A new chapel at the lordly residence, near Edgware, of the Duke of Chandos? A set of anthems—the Chandos Anthems. The death of Queen Caroline? A Funeral Anthem. Battles, peace treaties? *Te Deums*, anthems, overtures, oratorios. The opening of the Foundling Hospital chapel? Another anthem. A trip on the river by the king? A suite of pieces—the *Water Music*. Studies for a favourite harpsichord pupil? A set of pieces.

'Mr Handel will you write this?' 'Mr Handel could we

have such and such in a fortnight's time?' 'Can I have my part in the new oratorio/opera in a month's time?'

Mr Handel was kept busy.

His music is that of an active man, clear minded and practical enough to undertake successfully any job at a moment's notice. To stop here, however, is misleading. Handel saw suddenly and wrote with speed—an oratorio often took no more than a month to compose. But he could see both widely and deeply. He can make us penetrate far in imaginative exploration.

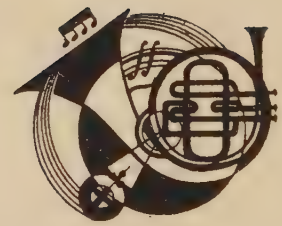
'Total eclipse' may be studied. Beyond the actual notes we feel the impending blindness of Handel (*Samson* was written in 1742, ten years before blindness became complete), the blindness of Milton, from whose *Samson Agonistes* the text of the oratorio was constructed. We feel not only the blindness of particular people. We feel the fact of blindness itself. We sympathise with all who are blind.

The music, by itself, gives sadness, sympathy, and (Samson's) anger. The words define special reasons. Thus, perhaps, you may see why words attached to music do not improve the music but merely add a context.

Handel was born of middle-class Saxon parentage. He came to live in a country where the middle class was the pre-eminent section of the community. He gave to the middle class its own form of music. *Messiah* is at the top of the list of masterpieces appreciated by the middle class. This is because the words attract the respectable, who feel that by hearing the words their respectability increases; the tunes are tunes; the tradition, since *Messiah* was given by Handel to the Foundling Hospital, has been for this work to make money.

But Handel was an artist as well as a business man (please, he was never bankrupt). He was, therefore, curious. You must be curious too.

Go away and buy a vocal score, second hand, of any oratorio you don't know. Play it and discover Handel.



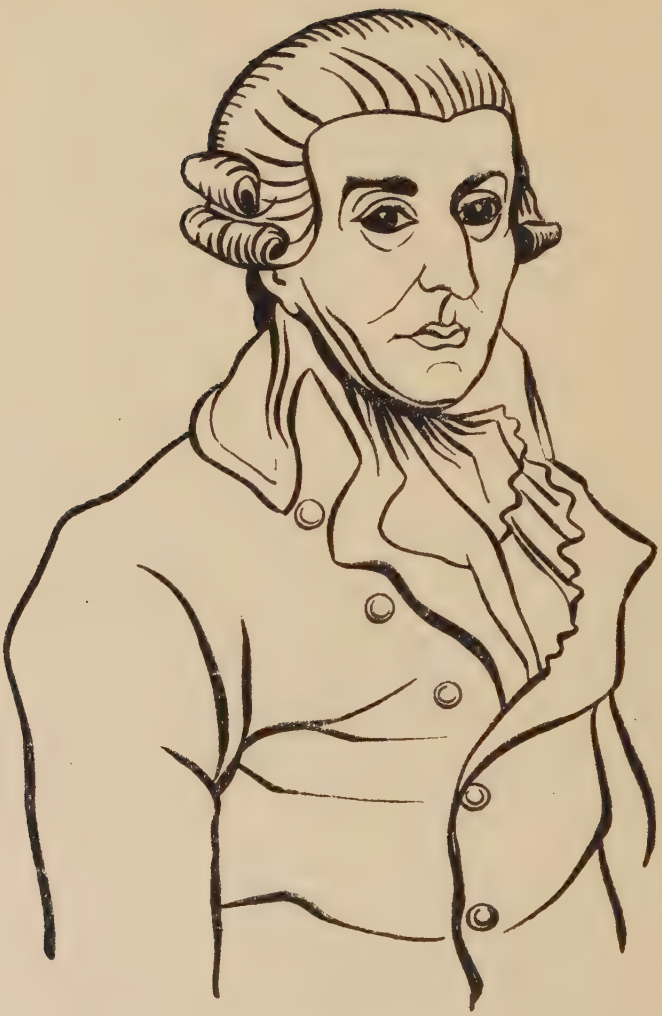
VI: *HANDEL*

Works to perform

Acis and Galatea (as an introduction to major choral works)	Novello
Concertos for Organ and Orchestra (Op. 4)	Paxton
Harpsichord Suites	Augener
Seven pieces and six fugues (pianoforte)	"
Sonatas for 2 violins (or oboes or flutes) and piano	"
Songs	Novello and O.U.P.

Works to hear

Concerti Grossi (Op. 6)	Decca X 119-143
Jephtha	(No complete recordings)
Messiah	Columbia DX 1283/1301
Music for the Royal Fireworks	Columbia DX 1494/5
Serse	(B.B.C. only)
Water Music	Columbia DX 538/9


HAYDN

CHAPTER SEVEN

HAYDN

(1732-1809)

THERE ARE PEOPLE who say that they read the newspapers. What they read, more often than not, are the headlines. Their knowledge of everyday affairs is, therefore, limited. There are people who read musical history in the same way.

Haydn might be represented for them in this way:—

BOY CHORISTER EXPELLED FROM CATHEDRAL CHOIR
WHEELWRIGHT'S SON JOINS PALACE STAFF
MUSICIAN'S UNION CHAIRMAN TAKES ACTION: FAREWELL SYMPHONY
HAYDN AT IT AGAIN: SYMPHONIC SURPRISE
CHILDREN'S SINGING AT ST. PAUL'S COMMENDED
TRIBUTE TO HANDEL—DR HAYDN'S ORATORIO
NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM FOR AUSTRIA
CHIVALROUS FRENCH OFFICER—ENEMY SINGS TO OLD HAYDN.

I don't think, if you are honest, that you can add much more to that from your knowledge of Haydn. Perhaps a couple more symphonies—those called 'The Clock' and 'The London'; 'My Mother Bids Me Bind my Hair'; 'The Sailor's Song'; less probably the 'Lark' Quartet and *The Seasons*.

Yet Haydn is one of the most important among composers. More than this he is quite one of the most attractive. He has

the quality of seeming always to take you—and me—into his confidence.

He does this by never appearing assertive, by coaxing rather than commanding, by quiet, orderly, refined and intelligent conversation. One could swear, after hearing half-a-dozen quartets and a couple of symphonies that Haydn hated public life, preferring a few friends in a room of his own. Oddly enough one would be right.

Haydn spent the greater part of his life, from 1760, in the service of a noble family—the Esterhazys, whose country retreat was some miles out of Vienna. We turn to the first biography of Haydn to appear in England.[1]

'Haydn, now received into the Esterhazy family, placed at the head of a grand orchestra, and attached to the service of a patron immensely rich, found himself in that happy union of circumstances, too rare for our pleasures, which gives opportunity to genius to display all its powers.

From this moment his life was uniform, and fully employed. He rose early in the morning, dressed very neatly, and placed himself at a small table by his pianoforte, where the hour of dinner usually found him still seated.

'In the evening, he went to the rehearsal, or to the opera, which was performed, in the prince's palace, four times every week.

'Sometimes, but not often, he devoted a morning to hunting.

'The little time, which he had to spare, on common days, was divided between his friends and Mademoiselle Boselli. Such was the course of his life for more than thirty years.

[1] *The Life of Haydn* in a series of letters written at Vienna—translated from the French of L. A. C. Bombet (by William Gardiner in 1817).

This accounts for the astonishing number of his works. They may be arranged in three classes: instrumental music, church music and operas.'

We have kept away from scandal pretty well in this book. But I notice that Mlle Boselli has walked in. The plain truth is that Haydn, before he went to Esterhaz, married, absent-mindedly, his landlord's daughter. As this lady was not in the least interested in Haydn's musical career, and as Mlle Boselli was, he preferred the company and conversation of the latter. That's all!

Haydn is regarded as the founder of the string quartet. The best way to appreciate what he did in this field is to look at the difference between his first quartets and his last. The first were written before Handel died, the last four years or so before Wagner was born. Haydn bridges two very different periods.

In the early quartets the *string quartet* has hardly come into existence. Instead of four parts there are really three, for the viola had very little to do except duplicate the cello part. One feels that a keyboard instrument would help.

Indeed in these quartets the harpsichord *was* used. The quartet had not advanced very far from the trio sonatas which were commonly enjoyed in the early days of the eighteenth century. If anything the individual movements were shorter and less involved. They are ideal for pleasant listening—as I noticed the other day when I sat a crowd of young people down to that (in F) numbered Op. 3, No. 2. They are ideal for private playing, unpretentious, difficult enough to inspire pride on the amateur player's part, simple enough not to discourage.

Other composers wrote like this. There were Gossec,

Boccherini, Gryrowetz, J. C. Bach, Vanhall, Dittersdorf. Their music may sometimes be rescued from salvage heaps and their tunes will often charm. These composers are not regarded as 'important', but Haydn would have respected them as pleasant and companionable writers of party pieces. Some of the party pieces had more instruments than others and were called symphonies.

Haydn differed from most of his contemporaries because he had more of a musical personality.

He liked curious things—strange rhythms, such as he remembered from the country tunes which his father used to sing at home at Rohrau; unexpected changes of key; very quick music and, on the other hand, very slow music; a sense of humour. Sometimes he managed to put the odd things he enjoyed into music.

Listen particularly to the cheerful gossip of many of the last movements—whether of sonatas, symphonies or quartets. (All these represented the same sort of music but laid out for different conditions). Listen to the brisk energy of the scherzos. Listen to the frequent changes of thought—as in the first movement of the C major quartet (Op. 74, No. 1); to the contrast between movements—as in the D major quartet (Op. 76, No. 5). Here an open-faced, smiling first movement without a suspicion of deep thought changes to F sharp major, where a great river of melody flows through green fields of the imagination.

Compare the highly instrumental and dramatic first movement of the 'Emperor' quartet with the variations movement. Look ahead again to the last movement which turns from the rough-edged and unexpected C minor to the major.

If you look round you in this way you will find better than from any text-book what Haydn did for the string quartet.

It is clear that these, and other works, reflected a change in general outlook. The latter quartets are still attractive in musical pattern, but they are also essays on aspects of life. They touch our emotions much more readily. In the early works we often want to laugh. In the later works, if we are honest, we sometimes also want to cry. The music has become more varied in mood, more romantic.

Haydn's quartets (there are at least eighty-two, and you will be fortunate if you hear as many as a dozen) suggest that no better music for this medium could ever be written. This is true. Others—Mozart and Beethoven, who both learned from Haydn, wrote equally well. But differently—not better.

'An intelligent woman said, that when she heard a quartet of Haydn's, she fancied herself present at the conversation of four agreeable persons. She thought that the first violin had the air of an eloquent man of genius, of middle age, who supported a conversation, the subject of which he had suggested.

'In the second violin she recognized a friend of the first, who sought by all possible means to display him to advantage, seldom thought of himself, and kept up the conversation, rather by assenting to what was said by the other, than by advancing any ideas of his own.

'The alto (viola) was a grave, learned, and sententious man. He supported the discourse of the first violin by laconic maxims, striking for their truth.

'The bass was a worthy old lady, rather inclined to chatter,

and yet was always desiring to put in a word. But she gave an additional grace to the conversations, and while she was talking the other interlocutors (talkers) had time to breathe.'

My old book gives a better lead to listening to Haydn's quartets than do many new books. It emphasises the friendliness. But Haydn did not expect his friends to be half-wits. The scatter-brained will, therefore, always contider him to be a 'high-brow'. You, of course, will recognize that he is not.

Symphonies sound frightening.

'After a slow introduction in the tonic minor, in which there is a modulation to the relative major (of the tonic minor), the first movement proper commences with the first subject. This, in the major, is heralded by a half close. The flute and the bassoon in contrary motion, enter at the tenth bar—'. And so on. Any more of that and you will deserve a headache. But that is what symphonies are often made to sound like.

All that, of course, is useful information. It is, incidentally, about the 'Clock' symphony. But useful information in one sense often turns out to be useless in another.

Haydn composed nearly 200 symphonies. Why? Because symphonies in Haydn's day were not the serious and exceptional works they have since become. More or less any music for more than three or four instruments would have been called symphony in the first part of the eighteenth century. Such music might prelude an opera, or an oratorio; it might occur anywhere during the performance of such a work. It might be music for an out-of-doors summer night party, or for a winter's evening entertainment of a few friends.

The main thing to remember is that the symphony, as Haydn knew it, started life not very severely. Movements were short. After all, at a party people wanted to talk. If they wanted to talk then there must be intervals—as also for filling empty glasses. Of course there were those who talked while the symphonies of three, four or five movements were being played. There still are.

Haydn set out then, to write entertainment music. Being a craftsman he saw to it that it was good entertainment and, therefore, of its sort good music. A jolly opening piece; a quiet singing piece; a familiar dance or two; a quick finish to leave everybody in good spirits.

You might like to keep an ear open for symphonies of great charm and great simplicity by such a composer as John Christian Bach. There is nothing to 'understand' but a lot to enjoy.

Now Haydn had to write so many symphonies that it is not surprising he varied his design. The more people applauded him the better pleased he was and the more pains he took. People talked less and listened more. They went to the Esterhazys to hear Mr Haydn's band (which he made bigger when he could raise more money from his employers) rather than to gossip.

Haydn's symphonies were heard in other places—in Paris, in Oxford, in London, in Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam. Haydn became famous. He was asked to compose works. For Cadiz Cathedral he wrote the *Seven Words from the Cross* (which you may hear in string quartet form). For Paris symphonies, one of which introduced a popular French song into the slow movement. This was much liked by Marie Antoinette. For London he wrote 12 symphonies.

Haydn came to London twice—in 1791 and in 1794. In the former year he arrived on New Year's Day and Dr Charles Burney wrote in his diary:

'1791—This year was auspiciously begun, in the musical world, by the arrival in London of the illustrious Joseph Haydn. 'Tis to Salomon that the lovers of music are indebted for what the lovers of music will call this blessing. Salomon went over himself to Vienna, upon hearing of the death of the Prince of Esterhazy, the great patron of Haydn, purposely to tempt that celebrated musical genius hither; and on February 25, the first of Haydn's incomparable symphonies, which was composed for the concerts of Salomon, was performed. Haydn himself presided at the pianoforte [this was when music was conducted from the keyboard]: and the sight of that renowned composer so electrified the audience, as to excite an attention and a pleasure superior to any that had ever, to my knowledge, been caused by instrumental music in England. All the slow movements were encored; which never before happened, I believe, in any country.'

This gives us some idea of the tremendous effect which the *new music* of Haydn—for in 1791 it was modern, contemporary or what you will—had on those to whom Haydn was before but a name and a reputation. Haydn, for his part, must have been both surprised and pleased. For Dr Burney himself had written a long (and, to be truthful, undistinguished) poem—*Verses on the Arrival of the Great Musician Haydn in England*—in honour of the great man and a Moravian clergyman, the Rev C. J. Latrobe, had composed three sonatas (also, I fear, undistinguished) which he asked permission to dedicate to Haydn. He, being kind as well as

great, accepted the dedication. In fact he should have been, and probably was, very grateful to Mr Latrobe, who had for many years tried to persuade all his friends to perform works by Haydn (and Mozart) and had never gone to the Continent without coming back with one or two scores.

It is sometimes thought that publicity is a modern art, but we may be sure that Salomon, the concert promoter, knew all there was to be known about advertisement. He ran off to Vienna to get a contract signed just as Mr Solomons travels across the world to find a boxing champion. And he knew how to ensure full houses. He saw to it that everybody was aware of what was happening, so that Haydn was invited to all musical functions in London, was given an honorary degree at Oxford, was taken to the races at Ascot, was taken to Court, had his portrait painted, and so on until the old man must have been ready to go back to Austria for a rest!

But all the music lovers were not in fashionable places. There were some, acquainted with Haydn's music, who could not come to see their hero. Such a one was the Rev Thomas Twining, a Colchester clergyman, whose wistful letter to Dr Burney reminds us how much we owe to the Twinings of this country for our own cultural tradition. On February 15, 1791, he wrote '. . . And now, my dear friend, let's draw our stools together, and have some fun. Is it possible we can help talking of Haydn first? How do you like him? What does he say? What does he do? What does he play upon? How does he play? . . . The papers say he has been bowed to by whole orchestras when he has appeared at the play-houses. Is he about anything in the way of compositions? Come! come! I'll pester you no more with

interrogations; but trust to your generosity to gratify my ardent curiosity in your own way.'

So must we all feel when we have friends who meet great men, and so does an eighteenth century letter bring us nearer to Haydn.

It is not surprising that in comparison with his earlier symphonies the 'London' symphonies sound more symphonic—bigger, more developed, more demanding of close attention. The composer has become a *public* figure. In his capacity as a private musician at Eisenstadt he could be intimate. As a famous European figure he was expected to sound grand and famous. Moreover audiences at public concerts wanted their money's worth!

The charm of Haydn is that however distinguished he knew himself to be, he never forgot what he really was—a merry peasant. He blew a lot of fresh air into the scent-laden, artificial, bewigged atmosphere of society.

'Haydn, desirous of diverting the prince's company, went and bought at a fair near Eisenstadt, a whole basket-full of whistles, little fiddles, cuckoos, wooden trumpets and other such instruments as delight children. He was at the pains of studying their compass and character, and composed a most amusing symphony with these instruments only, some of which even executed *solos:* the cuckoo is the general bass of the piece.'

The 'Toy Symphony' is still a delight to those who would like to play in an orchestra, but are too lazy to find out how.

'Many years afterwards, when Haydn was in England, he perceived that the English, who were very fond of his instrumental compositions, when the movement was lively and *allegro*, generally fell asleep during the *andante* or *adagio*,

Haydn at the Fair

in spite of all the beauties he could accumulate. He therefore wrote an *andante*, full of sweetness, and of the most tranquil movement; all the instruments seemed gradually to die away; but, in the middle of the softest *pianissimo*, striking up all at once, and reinforced by a stroke on the kettle-drum, they made the sleeping audience start.'

Haydn's symphony was meant to be a surprise. Many other symphonies have had similar effect without, however, the intention. Alas! how few people are able to get into Haydn's comic spirit.

The affection which was felt for Haydn's music is represented by the enormous number of his works which have nicknames. 'The Bear', 'The Hen', 'The Drum-Roll' (which a friend of mind once miscalled 'The Jam-Roll'), 'The Clock', and many more among the symphonies. Whether the nicknames mean what they say is not very important. What is important is to realize what Haydn could do with a few strings, flutes, oboes, trumpets, horns, bassoons and drums.

Some of the symphonies have other titles—'The Passion', 'The Alleluia', 'The Christmas'.

Haydn wrote church music, and symphonies came into the church where now there are organ voluntaries. Haydn also wrote Masses, which are nearly always more cheerful than church music is supposed to be. Haydn shared with Luther a reluctance to let the devil have the best tunes.

The two oratorios—*The Creation* and *The Seasons* were based on Handelian models. The text of the first was given to Haydn by Salomon. It was based on Milton. In fact the very same story had once been suggested to Handel. *The Seasons* was adapted from Thomson's famous (and unread)

poem. The association of poet and composer was proper if only because both felt the force of romantic thought without going very far away from the classical manner in expression.

In these two works, with their fine choruses and exciting 'descriptions', Haydn compensates for the fact that he left very few songs. Don't, however, try to sing 'With verdure clad' until you are better than your family think you are. I have too often heard this heavenly song sound green: but the wrong sort of green.

You can't really do better than start your private study with the piano sonatas. What I have said about symphonies and chamber music will suit them too. When you play them don't think of an Associated Board examiner in black coat and striped trousers. Imagine you are playing them to the kindly, generous, genial Haydn. He would not tell you your mistakes. Probably they would not need pointing out. He would tell you the good points (if any) in your playing.

When Haydn lay on his deathbed French guns bombarded Vienna. Shells fell near to his house. His servants were distressed. 'Why are you frightened?' said the old man. 'Don't you know that nothing can happen to you while Haydn is here?' In this anecdote we see, surely, the classical artist. The French guns brought the Romantic movement with them.

Haydn, the patriot, was in his last days carried to his pianoforte. He sat there and sang 'The Emperor's Hymn'. This great hymn is no longer a national anthem. It remains, however, as a great song of faith which we can sing. It is, in fact, greater than a national anthem can be. It is, like Hadyn's other works, for all of us: not only for some of us.

The tranquil influence of Haydn—the common sense—to which we gratefully return was recorded thus in a commemorative poem.[1]

Not from a changed capricious world didst steal,
Stunned by the lauded noise of some new lyre.
To thee, in life's declining years was given,
The sum of many a burning hour's desire,
And while the heavens were with War's tempest riven,
Thou, all untroubled 'mid their thunders deep,
Shrouded in calm renown, sank peacefully to sleep.

[1] By H. F. Chorley and printed in *The English Annual* of 1836.

VII: *HAYDN*

Works to perform

Creation, The (Choruses)	
English Canzonets	Novello
'Glorious things of thee are spoken' (The Emperor's Hymn)	Any hymnal
Trios for violin, cello and pianoforte	Augener
Sonatas for pianoforte	Augener

Works to hear

Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra	Columbia DX 1535/6
Creation, The	
Quartet in C (Op. 76 No. 3). The 'Emperor'	HMV Haydn Quartet Society Vol. 4
Trio in G (with 'Gipsy' Rondo)	HMV DA 895-6
Symphony No. 94 in G (The 'Surprise')	Columbia DX 1490/2
Symphony No. 104 in D (The 'London')	HMV C 3515-7

WAGNER

CHAPTER EIGHT

WAGNER

(1813-1883)

But Wagner, like a rushing whirlwind, storms us,
And, despot-like, submission doth demand:

I THOUGHT OF those lines—by a Victorian poet—this morning. Hurrying to the breakfast table I was halted as the wireless was turned on. 'The Ride of the Valkyrie' poured out. We all stopped. We had to listen. We had to turn the wireless down too. There was a lot of noise.

Wagner makes you listen. He intended to. He had a message, he thought, to deliver. Or, rather, several messages.

Unlike our previous composers Wagner deliberately tried to preach to the world. More particularly he tried to preach to Germany. Not only did he put what he had to say in terms of music but also in prose. There are ten volumes of his prose writings. No one, except scholars, reads his prose works. They are often very dull.

Wagner's ideas may briefly be set out. He believed in individuality. He believed in equality—provided that he was first and that Germany took precedence over other countries. He believed that human nature was debased—was, in fact, rapidly reaching a catastrophe; but that through catastrophe and suffering mankind would be improved. He believed in the value of sacrifice. He believed ultimately in a form of Christianity. The way in which Wagner set out his ideas often made him unpopular. He was rarely tactful. But

frequently there was a great deal of truth in what he said.

In music Wagner used a particular form of expression—opera. But Wagnerian opera was a special form of opera, developed by Wagner to suit his ideas.

Before we talk about Wagner's operas let us stop and think about opera generally. Have you ever seen an opera? Probably not. English people think operas dull until they see them: then they think otherwise. Unfortunately most people play for safety, book for (say) *Madam Butterfly* and leave other people to book for less familiar titles. The tragedy is that so few patronise the unfamiliar. Thus they may not be repeated. Outside London opera exists mostly in talks on musical appreciation and in articles by earnest young men (and women) who are said to be music critics.

Those of us who feel that opera should be established in Oldham—or Aberdeen—may take heart from the depressing state in which Wagner found opera in Germany. Nobody—except Society which preferred French novelties—thought much about opera. Wagner made them. First he wrote the operas—words as well as music; then he trained the singers; finally he built, at Bayreuth, a theatre solely for his own works. How did he do it? By determination, combined with great skill in spending other people's money. Particularly of his friend and patron Ludwig II, King of Bavaria.

During the last few months while I have been writing this book I have continually been asked 'What do you think of the Festival Hall?' Or, 'Is the new Hall good for sound?' Or, 'Isn't the Festival Hall awful?' Perhaps you have heard something along these lines. If so you can well imagine the state of affairs towards 1875 and 1876 when the famous theatre—of which the completion had so many times been

deferred—at Bayreuth. Everybody had heard of this theatre all over Europe, for Wagner had been here, there and everywhere to raise funds.

In 1875 rehearsals began in the new theatre *for the following year* and a few distinguished guests were invited to see the place.

There are two parts to every theatre: one is where the actors act, the other where spectators sit to watch the actors. In the case of a theatre designed for opera the actors' part must incorporate the musicians' quarters. Bayreuth was the visible symbol of Wagner's immense care for practical considerations. So the whole conception anticipated modern theories in architecture in that nothing was included except it served a definite end.

The auditorium (where the audience sits) broke with the conventions of the classical opera house, for it had no galleries at the side—only one at the back of the house. The general plan followed that of the amphitheatre in that the audience was placed on rising tiers arranged arc-wise, and everybody had an uninterrupted view of the stage.

When we perform operas we have to beg the audience's pardon for no one can see the stage without curious silhouettes blocking the way—the ugliest is of the conductor! Wagner buried both orchestra and conductor. They were placed in a well between the auditorium and the stage, but continued back under the stage. The front part of this well —that is the part nearest the audience—was partially covered by a sheet-iron roof. Thus the audience looked over this roof, without interruption, to the stage.

Naturally this arrangement had an effect on the orchestral music. In fact, with the strings at the front, the wood-wind

in the middle distance and the brass, below the stage, farthest away there was the most superb blend and the most beautiful mellowness of brass tone that had ever been heard. The unity of tone thus achieved has been an ideal to composers and conductors ever since. Wagner had room for 115 players. The conductor, who in 1876 was Hans Richter, sat at a desk lit by a petroleum lamp. Another sign of scientific advance!

As for the stage the first impression was of great depth. First there was the main stage. Behind that a narrower back stage. Further back again an extension (which was not in the original designs) which could be utilized to give the effect of extreme distance. There were no glaring footlights, the lighting being operated from the wings, while there was adequate space for the preparation of changes of scene above, below and at each side of the stage.

When Wagner first entered his theatre in 1875 he was welcomed with ceremony by his co-operative artists and Franz Betz (who gave his services free) sang his first entry as Wotan in *The Rhinegold*:

'Tis ended, the everlasting work!
On mountain peak
see! the god's abode:
stately soar
its glittering walls!
As in dreams 'twas designed,
as my will did direct,
strong and fair
stands it in sight:
fortress fearless and proud!

This was the end of a life's work. Where do *we* begin? By learning how to enjoy opera.

The best way to enjoy opera is to go and see it. If you can't do that then make an opera. If you want to know how ask someone to let you see Mr Britten's *Let's make an opera*. In any case find your way behind the scenes in a theatre.

We were doing an opera rehearsal the other day. Susan was backstage. There was a commotion. Susan and Michael were fighting over the sea machine. We settled it by setting one up with the sea machine, the other with the wind machine. They were instructed, strictly, as to when they should play. They were flattered by being told that they were part of the orchestra. They didn't see the opera. They were part of it. They haven't stopped talking about opera, as heard from the back, ever since.

Wagner started in the same sort of way. His stepfather was an actor and something of a dramatist, two of his sisters became actresses and a brother an actor-singer-manager. It was seeing his elders engaged in this exciting business of the theatre that turned his interest thereto. The theatre, he said of its early influence in his life, 'had a fascination like that of a spectre'. In youth he tried to write plays. One, which was very bad, had forty-two murders. Today it would, for that reason, be regarded as very good by cinemagoers.

Interest in the theatre as such, study and experiment gave Wagner more knowledge of purely theatrical matters than is often possessed by composers. As for music he had home influence again. But an early hero was Weber, a family acquaintance. Now Weber was not only a great composer. He was also a notable patriot, showing to the world that a German composer could provide opera music quite as good as an Italian or French composer.

It was music which accorded with German romantic taste.

Mysterious, fantastic, heroic, fairy, woodland. *Oberon*, *Euryanthe*, *Preciosa*, *Der Freischütz* touch the emotions, fire the imagination. Beethoven in *Fidelio* had gone in the same direction too. Beethoven was also a hero to Wagner.

Wagner saw the immense power that could come to a composer able to extend the emotional purpose of opera. It should be said that Wagner enjoyed authority. On the one hand he was that sort of man. On the other he did not see why an artist should not be as influential, as decisive in the community as the politican, the bishop, the banker. Wagner was not alone in that opinion. Shelley expressed it. So did Goethe. So did Mendelssohn.

Wagner had to be authoritative. Had it been otherwise he would never have succeeded in doing what he set out to do.

He spent twenty-five years working at the *Ring*. During that time he was involved in the 1848 Revolution and expelled from Saxony, troubled by domestic worries, pitched from poverty in one country to poverty in another, often ill. He finished the four operas—*The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, *Siegfried*, *The Twilight of the Gods*—which make the complete *Ring of the Nibelungen* and saw them established at Bayreuth. There was not, however, very much time to spare.

The Bayreuth Festival first took place in 1876. Seven years later Wagner died.

I suspect that those who often decry Wagner's ambition really envy his capacity for accomplishment.

Before we leave Wagner's personality we should notice that those with a taste for unpleasantness frequently observe that he was a very naughty man. He borrowed money and never paid it back; he lived in luxury when he couldn't afford it; (*pianissimo*) he made love where he shouldn't.

About this I would suggest that you consider his good points first, his bad points second. Many people loved him, children found him irresistible, those who were wealthy sometimes felt it a duty and privilege to help him. Ask anyone you know (who is rude about Wagner) if they would spend twenty-five years over one undertaking.

Wagner may have been somewhat irregular in method, but he resented the way in which money was squandered uselessly—as in the court at Dresden, where he was employed. He resented too the fact that intrigues could make life difficult either for men of talent but no influence, or for the poor in general. At his best Wagner anticipated some part of the social revolution which came later to ease poverty and suffering. Which also made music and art more accessible to all sorts of people.

And all this—how does it affect his music?

Look at the operas in order of appearance:

Rienzi (1840). This may be regarded with some earlier and forgotten works as a trial run. In it Wagner attempted to show that he could compose in the approved, popular style, as well as Meyerbeer and Spontini. It was based on an English novel by Bulwer Lytton. It had this in common with the operas of Handel: it was based on a classical study. The overture, which is sometimes played by military and brass bands, has a certain brassy, imperious quality. It had a new note of fierceness.

The Flying Dutchman (1841) is allegorical. It tells—the legend was very old—of a Dutch sea captain condemned for his sins to sail across the seas until he should find a woman who should love him sufficiently to rescue him from his curse. In the Dutchman you may see, if your imagination

will carry, the soul, moving eternally through space and time, seeking rescue. Wagner certainly intended more than a mere story, but those searchings of mind which we call philosophy can only be followed if made, in some way, 'real'.

Wagner gives—in the overture which may be familiar to you—both 'real' and 'unreal'. You may almost feel the presence of the sea. You may feel behind that the stormy seas on which life is launched. Elsewhere reality is noticed. In the sailor's chorus, in the spinning chorus. Unreality in Senta's ballad.

From this work on Wagner presented his listeners with music and poetry (for his poetic gift should not be forgotten) on two levels. The picturesque, which is where most of us find ourselves when first we go to the opera, is one. The other is that on which the thought and emotional life of humanity is shown.

This discussion should not make you enjoy Wagner's music less. Enjoy it first, by all means, for its colour. But remember that there is more to it than that. If the matter appears difficult now it will be worth coming back to later, aided by greater experience of life.

Tannhaüser (1844) illustrates the main points even more clearly. Tannhaüser, a medieval knight, also is in search of relief from sin. He seeks haven in both heavenly and earthly love—in religion on the one hand and the purity of Elizabeth on the other. Wagner dresses this legend sumptuously. We are present as the pilgrims make their way to Rome; when the Festival of Song is held; where Venus holds court. The end of the story is the funeral of Elizabeth and the death of Tannhaüser. The end is in destruction, in pessimism, yet in a state of bliss beyond both.

Such ideas are not so easily acceptable today as in Wagner's day, nor does the romantic form of expression conform to our more practical, scientific outlook. The miracle of the blossoming staff, the magical element present in many of the operas goes against our reasoning. At heart, however, we are less confident.

Lohengrin (1848), *The Mastersingers* (1867), *Parsifal* (1882) have a medieval background in common with *Tannhaüser*. Two are religious works and show to what extent Wagner considered religious philosophy.

The four operas of *The Ring* are mythology, absorbed and newly expressed by Wagner. The struggle between the gods, the emergence of the heroic—all that is vastly contained in the complex plots was prophetic. Prophetic of a crisis in civilization.

Argument about Wagner's meaning will go on for ever. The final word, perhaps, was his statement:

'Music, even in its highest intensity, is and always remains feeling.'

This, too, I felt when I heard *The Ride of the Valkyries* before breakfast, and when I first heard the Good Friday music from *Parsifal* at the Queen's Hall.

Wagner's great gift to musical tradition is the extent to which he has made so many people conscious of feeling, of emotion.

First he took the orchestra of Beethoven, Meyerbeer, Spontini and Weber and made it a more expressive instrument. In *The Ring* he had three of each woodwind instrument. As well he had cor anglais, bass clarinet, 8 horns, 4 tubas, 3 trumpets, 6 harps, 4 trombones, contrabass tuba, bass trumpet, contrabass trombone. With these instruments he

achieved miracles of beauty and of power. At Bayreuth, as we have already discovered, he put the orchestra out of sight, below the stage, so that the audience should not be distracted.

Wagner's achievement in respect of the orchestra may best be realized if we open *The Times* for one day late in August, 1876. The music critic had been to Bayreuth and heard *The Ring* for the first time. His notice reflects his bewilderment.

'The orchestra must for ever be doing something. Like a wind that is always blowing, or a stream that is always flowing, or trees that are always bending in obedience to the swayings of the breeze; but what that something shall be the poet alone can decide. . . . It is hardly too much to say that, apart from the drama to which it is allied the orchestral music of the *Ring* would signify little more at the best than a succession of chords, scales (not infrequently chromatic), figures, and snatches of tunes, distributed capriciously among the instruments, '*tremolandos*' (ad infinitum), strange and uuheard-of combinations, perpetual changes of key, etc.—a chaos of sound . . . [which] deprived of the varied and singular fascination that attends it when obviously explained by what is being said and done upon the stage, is almost unmeaning.'

Such was the effect of the 'new music'. We may listen to the music with more understanding because Wagner's methods have been adopted by almost every composer of later time. Still, however, we should *see* the operas fully to understand the music.

For Wagner an opera was a whole. Not a story, split into sections, set to music, and with decorative scenery added.

Opera was, for him, a perfect blend of all the elements. An opera was a symphony with stage and words incorporated. An extension of Beethoven's Choral symphony.

You will read one day about *Leitmotiv*. Let us look at the principle simply.

I want to write an opera about John Smith. I think of a tune (a creepy-crawly tune, because I don't like John Smith). The orchestra plays the tune whenever John Smith is going to appear, or whenever someone is talking about him. John Smith joins the borough council. I think of a fine, pompous trumpetty tune for the councillors (not that they really deserve it). John Smith falls in love with the town hall keeper's daughter. She has a tune, which very conveniently can be played with John Smith's tune. (This is called counterpoint and is supposed to be very clever). John Smith has an argument with the council. His tune gets mixed up with theirs. The mayor shoots John Smith (we have to end the opera somehow!). The John Smith tune crawls off into a funeral march. The John Smith, councillors', town hall keeper's daughter's tunes are *Leitmotive*.

Now for John Smith put Siegfried or Wotan or Tristan: for the councillors put soldiers, sailors, gods, mastersingers: for the lady any female Wagnerian part. You have the idea of *Leitmotiv*.

Wagner used this device to make his meaning as plain as possible. His tunes often read like newspaper captions. They are brief but in large type.

This great, tumultuous figure must be the most difficult of artists to understand. You may hate him, or love him. You may not escape his greatness. He was the child of a troubled age and of a troubled country.

The same war which saw the death of Haydn saw the birth of Wagner. Wagner was born in Leipzig. Five months after he was born one of the greatest battles—the 'Battle of the Nations'—was fought in and around Leipzig. Disease came with battle and Wagner's father died as a result of typhoid.

From this uncertain start Wagner never recovered. He was always looking for love, sympathy, affection in a world which seemed oblivious of these qualities. His doubts are in his music. But also his hopes.

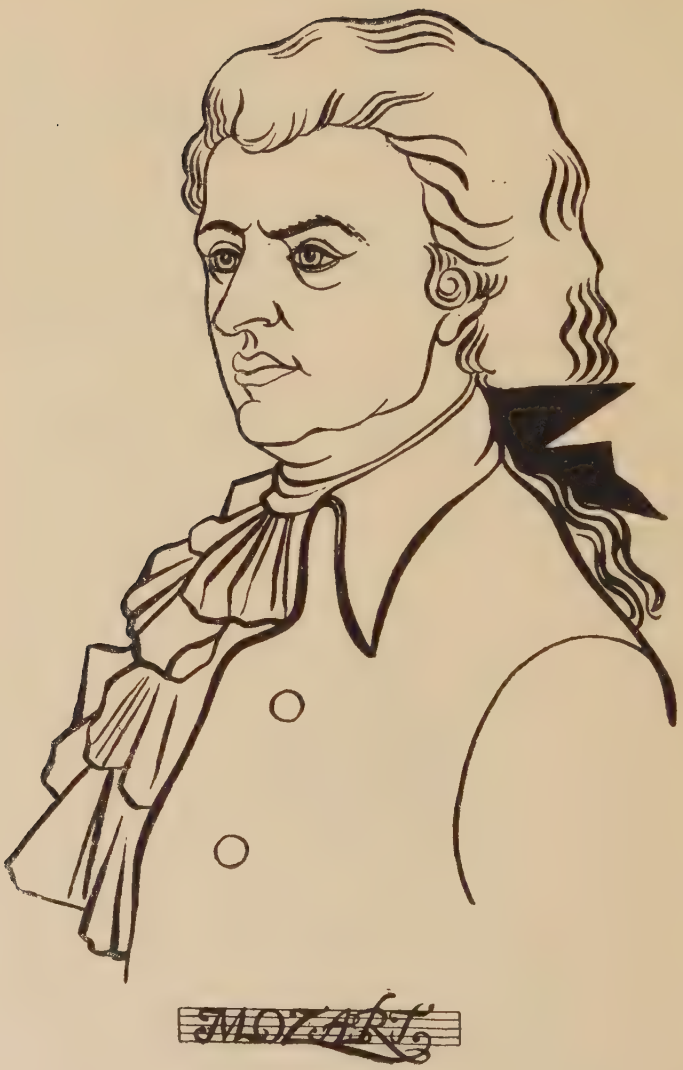
VIII: *WAGNER*

Works to perform

Five Songs	Schirmer
Vocal scores of operas (to taste)	Breitkopf and Härtel

Works to hear

Flying Dutchman, The—Overture	Decca K 1684/5
Mastersingers, The—Orchestral Suite	HMV C 3416/7
Rienzi—Overture	HMV C 3425/6
Tristan and Isolde—Prelude and Liebestad	HMV DB 3419/20
Twilight of the Gods—Siegfried's journey to the Rhine	Decca K 1284
Walküre—The Ride of the Valkyrie	HMV DB 6546


MOZART

CHAPTER NINE

MOZART

(1756-1791)

CURIOUSLY WHENEVER I hear the name Mozart I think first of the *Requiem Mass*. I say curiously because most people catch first Mozart's gaiety, his wit, his perfection of style. There is usually a good reason for our recollections. The *Requiem* I remember vividly in particular surroundings.

A large, resonant church, dimly lighted. A distant choir and orchestra. A performance in no way resembling a concert hall performance. The soloists were unnamed and stepped from their places in the choir. The orchestra was hidden. Being hidden it was easier to concentrate on the quality of the orchestration.

Darkness rather than light was Mozart's intention. Clarinets (instead of the obsolete basset horns), bassoons, trombones dominate. The lighter voiced woodwind are absent and the trumpets rare in appearance.

I remember that outside the church it was a dark and blustery night. A sense of foreboding, of eeriness, felt under these circumstances was increased by the knowledge that this was Mozart's last work, that he left it unfinished, that he was commissioned to compose it under odd circumstances.

We are told by Edward Holmes how 'early in August (1791) the composer was one day surprised by the entrance of a stranger, who brought him a letter without any signature, the purport of which was to inquire whether he

Mozart and The Stranger

would undertake the composition of a requiem, by what time he would be ready with it, and his price.'

In December, a few days before he died, Mozart was giving directions to his pupil Süssmayer, who completed the *Requiem*. He looked away from the music. 'Did I not tell you that I was writing this for myself?'

This *Requiem* has been sung in memory of many people, I have no doubt. One occasion in particular stands out, for the circumstances, as we now recall them, enhance the romantic character of the music. At the beginning of June in 1826 Weber, whose cousin Constanze had married Mozart, died in London. After a committee of musicians had considered the matter together with the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in London it was decided that Weber should be buried in the Catholic Chapel of St Mary's at Moorfields. On June 21 the funeral took place.

The great church—it seated 2000 people—was filled. The pulpit and altar were draped in black. On the altar and at the sides were large wax tapers and lamps, shining the more brightly in the dark sanctuary. Priests and deacons and acolytes awaited the body at the entrance to the chapel. When the procession approached the priests took their place at its head and as they led the way up the central aisle the instruments in the gallery commenced the opening movement of Mozart's *Requiem*. The whole work was then sung, liturgically; the intervals between the movements being filled by the necessary action of the service. The music, wrote *The Times*, was sublime.

Its performance was by the best musicians in London—singers from the opera and players from Covent Garden and the Philharmonic Society. Indeed, since there was not

very much space in the gallery of the chapel, many offers of help had to be refused. The organist of St Paul's Cathedral presided over the performance and he must have done so with great authority. He was Thomas Attwood (the composer of a well-known Whitsuntide hymn tune) and he had been a pupil of Mozart.

Such performances which we have experienced, or read about, may affect our outlook; but as we look at the score of the *Requiem*, alone at the piano, we feel a sense of eeriness, of absorption in dark thoughts. One might suggest a contemplation of death, but an artist studies much more the idea of death than the act of dying. I hope it is not too fanciful to feel a parallel between the music of Mozart and the emotional state of *Wuthering Heights*.

The link between the two works is the spirit of the Romantic movement which, affecting literature more than music in Mozart's lifetime, swept into full flood by the time of the creative careers of the Brontës. Haydn showed something of one side of Romanticism. Mozart another.

Of the two composers Mozart anticipated modern thought the more. He could be deeply tragic, even pessimistic; he could, as in *Cosifan tutte* and *Figaro*, be cynical. Both Haydn and Mozart were of the classical age of music but both stepped outside it. In different directions however. The same writer—H. F. Chorley—who celebrated Haydn also honoured the memory of Mozart in a poem. His feelings, though his expression is of its own period, are ours:

> *Methinks some mournful presage of decay*
> *Crept through thy dreams—and, whispering 'All is vain',*
> *Breathed its prophetic tones through every strain,*
> *Listening in sadness even 'mid measures gay.*

Mozart attracted our poets. Mrs Hemans wrote a poem on the *Requiem*, and Thomas Hardy 'To a Movement in Mozart's E Flat Symphony'. Both poems deserve reading and symbolize the romantic quality in Mozart's music, which called out romantic expression in verse.

As well as the *Requiem* we should consider a work of the same year—*The Magic Flute*. There is in this opera some of the darkness of the *Requiem*. The trombones are important, as also the basset horns. At the beginning of the second act an aria by Sarastro (The High Priest of Isis and Osiris), accompanied by a chorus of priests, has in the background divided violas, cellos, basset horns, bassoons and trombones. Then there is the lamenting music of Pamina. On the other side there is flippancy, as in the airs of Papageno, and the pantomime character of the wicked Monostatos.

This opera was written for his friend Schikaneder, to relieve the depressed finances of his opera house—the Theater auf der Wieden. On the practical side it needed some flippancy so as not to deter those who had recently been entertained by Schikaneder with farces and variety. The serious note which is apparent is due to the mysterious impulse which turned his deeper thoughts sometimes away from the works immediately in hand.

Matthew Arnold used to refer to an artistic virtue which he called 'high seriousness'. This is the quality in Mozart, for we can probably find no better term, which provokes also our 'high seriousness'.

Listen to the first movement of the G Minor symphony (No. 40, K. 550), to the famous and perplexing opening of the C major quartet (K. 465), to the D minor pianoforte

concerto (K. 466), to the last movement of the so-called 'Jupiter' symphony (No. 41, K. 551).

In such works the depth of Mozart's understanding of the uncertainties of spiritual life is displayed. There are moments of great sympathy—in the sense of 'suffering with'. Mozart himself had troubles enough. Being less fortunate than Haydn, both by natural inheritance and environment, he knew misfortune more familiarly. If this did not make him a greater composer it did make him a composer with a different outlook.

The eighteenth century is frequently a misunderstood period. There was, on the surface, much grace, beauty, charm, and wisdom. Beneath the surface there was much unhappiness, social misery and discontent. If, living then, you could avoid the undesirable, as Haydn was mostly fortunate in being able to do, then you might consider it the best of all ages in which to live. If you were less fortunate you might easily be reduced to the misfortunes of Richard Savage, one English poet, or the madness of Christopher Smart, another.

Mozart touched the extremes. But he never allowed the circumstances of his own life to influence improperly the course of his art. If we detect dark hints behind his music it is because we know something about the age and Mozart's relation to it. He himself would—apart, perhaps, from the operas—have denied that his personal affairs had any effect on his music. Nevertheless we must have some explanation for the exquisite richness of his music.

We may take a hint about performance. Too much stress is laid on note accuracy, on formal, precise, 'classical' presentation. Mozart's music calls for as much emotional consideration as anything by the 'Romantics'.

The truth is, of course, that all great music is both 'classical' and 'romantic' at the same time.

The romantic qualities in Mozart were not appreciated by his contemporaries. Of the G minor symphony his English biographer, Edward Holmes, remarks:

'For producing such music as this he suffered the usual penalty attendant on bold innovation and anticipation of the future: he was neither understood nor, of course, rewarded.'

By 1808, however, advanced criticism took a different attitude. The G minor symphony is referred to as that 'in which the composer tears so powerfully at our heart-strings that they resound interminably.' It was, too, the prophetic quality in Mozart which attracted Wagner. He was, said Wagner, 'this greatest and divinest genius, who made the first German opera, *Zauberflöte*.

Wagner elsewhere makes another important point which relates to what we have already said. Mozart's scores were scantily marked with details of expression. This was not because Mozart didn't want any expression—rather was it because, conducting his own music, he could tell his performers what he wanted.

In Mozart's early life music was written, performed, and, more often than not, forgotten. There was no idea of preserving it 'for posterity'. Music was written for a particular purpose. Having served its purpose it was put aside—finished and finished with.

Music for an occasion—that is what really distinguishes the classical nature. Purposeful music tended, like other purposeful art, to go into specially adapted shapes. A church is of one order, a town hall of another, while a house is

different again. (There may be a common bond between these different styles, as when a stone peculiar to a district is used, or as when the same artist decorates the interiors). So with music.

For out-of-door concerts Mozart wrote serenades, divertimentos, cassations. For church use many Masses. For court balls, minuets and other dances. For Dr Mesmer's house a little (very charming and you should hear it) opera—*Bastien and Bastienne;* for the coronation of Leopold II, as King of Bohemia in 1791, a brilliant and rather monumental opera —*La Clemenza di Tito.* An earlier opera—*Idomeneo,* also a masterpiece, was written for a royal command performance: in Munich for the Elector in 1780.

The famous motet—*Exsultate, jubilate,* with its florid but entrancing *Alleluia*—was written in 1773 because Mozart was then in Italy and because he wished to show the Milanese that he could write the sort of music which they approved.

If there was a wedding—as of the daughter of Sigmund Haffner, mayor of Salzburg—Mozart would write a cheerful and suitable work such as the 'Haffner' serenade, which we know as a symphony (K. 385). If there were pupils there were works specially written for them. A concerto for three pianos (K. 242) was not written because Mozart thought it would be interesting to try a new medium but because the Countess Lodron and her two daughters wished for a work in which they could all take part. One daughter was less good than the other. So Mozart wrote one part much easier than the other two.

Mozart undertook arrangements of Handel (his additions to Handel's own *Messiah* score are commonly used today) for the Baron van Swieten of Vienna. He wrote an *Adagio*

for harmonica and fantasias for mechanical organ. As well as church music, chamber music—some of it for the King of Prussia—and other domestic music, he wrote music for the rites of the Freemasons.

It is, therefore, difficult to know where to look for his greatest achievements. If we choose the operas, then there are the symphonies; if we select the quartets, quintets and trios (in the first class of which he comes nearest to the example of his admired Haydn), then there are the concertos.

And not only concertos for pianoforte or violin—among the latter are some of my *favourite* works—but concertos for clarinet, flute, horn, bassoon. Notice how wonderfully Mozart, inspired by his Salzburg friend Stadler, writes for the clarinet. Make a point of hearing the Clarinet quintet. Many works were inspired by great players like Stadler who, in the early days of the 'symphony orchestra', were making it possible for greater and more varied music to be written.

In the celebrated orchestra at Mannheim, where Mozart went in 1777, there was Wendling the flautist, and Ramm the oboe player. In Paris a few months later (Mozart's travels were generally in search of work) he met the Duc de Guise, who had been Ambassador in London. The Duc played the flute, his daughter the harp. This serves to show an important feature of music of that period. There was less difference between amateur and professional standards of competence. Possibly the amateurs practised rather harder than they do now!

The influence of the amateur whether he was a performer, a listener, or a patron was considerable on the nature of music. For he had sufficient knowledge to be really critical.

He could judge whether the article (i.e. the piece of music) made for him suited him. The wise composer, therefore, considered his public carefully. The really wise were those like Vanhall and Dittersdorf who never went too far ahead of common appreciation.

Mozart, as an artist, was ambitious. Sometimes (not by any means, always) he went over the heads of his audiences. It was, it must be admitted, often a temptation. When *Idomeneo* was produced in 1781 the newspaper reports omitted to mention the composer.

The *Marriage of Figaro* was taken off after nine performances because a forgotten work by a Spanish composer attracted better houses in Vienna.

And yet precisely because Mozart avoided coming too near to what his patrons would demand he kept his music clear of any one period. Works like the 'Linz' symphony or the delicious *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* do belong to the eighteenth century. We look at them, from outside, and love them.

With the greater works, however, we go inside them (or they come inside us); we feel that we belong to them. They do not sound 'old fashioned'. We do not understand them. We cannot. We know that whenever we hear or—better still—play them we shall discover something new. It is this eternal sense of discovery that marks the point at which greatness begins.

The quality of genius is indefinite. We may, however, say of Mozart that he had the most exquisite and refined ear. Not more than three or four other composers have so immediately and certainly known what would happen, in practice, to the combinations of sounds which they heard

in their minds. We may say also that Mozart's music bears ever the spirit of youth.

It is not the inexperience of youth but the very reverse that is so marked. A small child can see visions of beauty which those of us who are older cannot see—or at best see with difficulty. Mozart never lost this penetrating power of imaginative vision. We may compare him to Keats, to Purcell, to Shakespeare, to Handel. Although Mozart died young his physical age is not very important.

Some people do in half of three score years and ten what others require the whole span to achieve. It is not anything to wonder at. Some are quicker than others. Likewise it is foolish to lament, sentimentally, when the great die young. Mozart, I think, like Mendelssohn had finished his work.

'We do not wish to know the great performances of great men, we wish to know their *little* actions, how they walked, looked, and spoke, their crooked habits and peculiarities; and to know that Mozart had a restless and nervous fidgetiness in his hands and feet and seldom sat without some motion of them, makes him more present here than the most laboured picture.' So writes Edward Holmes. The little actions, the normal life of Mozart can better be learned from Mozart than from anyone else. Many of his letters still exist and may be read. Read some of them.

You will be surprised that so great a man, one who had been gifted beyond all children, could, personally, be so ordinary. His emotions, his everyday thoughts (some rather ribald and shocking to the over modest), his observations on passing life are ours. No less and no more. What happened when he translated them into other terms is seen in his music.

John Keats, who had so much in common with Mozart,

was not without knowledge of his music. For his interest in music he was indebted to his schoolmaster Charles Cowden Clarke:

But many days have passed since my heart
Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart;

What time you were before the music sitting,
And the rich notes to each sensation fitting.

These thoughts now come o'er me with all their might:—
Again I shake your hand—friend Charles, good night.

So, by Keats's acknowledgement, music passes into our thoughts. Keats may have been among the first to call Mozart divine: he was not among the last.

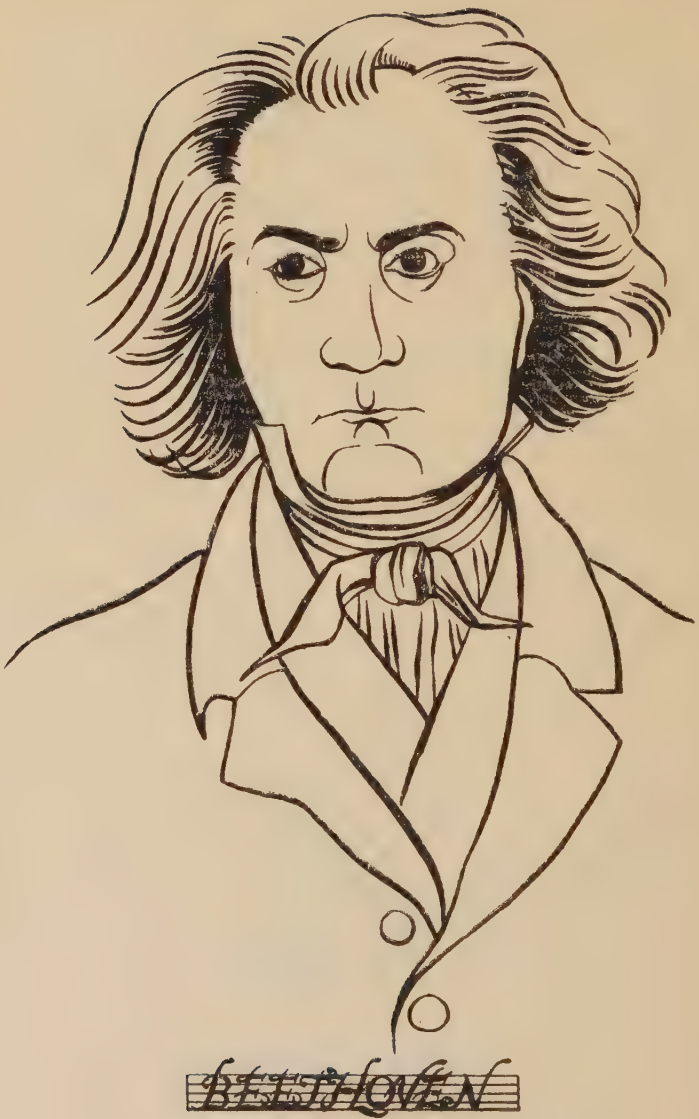
IX: *MOZART*

Works to perform

Early Minuets, etc.	Hinrichsen
Marriage of Figaro (vocal score)	Boosey and Hawkes
Papageno (adaptation for school use of *The Magic Flute*)	Patterson
Sonatas for Violin and Pianoforte	Augener
Sonatas for Pianoforte	Associated Board
Songs *see*	Clarendon Song Books—O.U.P.

Works to hear

Concerto in A for pianoforte and orchestra (K. 488)	Decca K 1394/6
Concerto (No. 5) in A for violin and orchestra. (K. 219)	HMV DB 2199/2202
Cosi fan tutte	HMV (Vols. 4, 5, 6 of Mozart Opera Society)
Quintet in A for clarinet and strings	Columbia DX 1187-90
Requiem	HMV DB 9541/8
Symphony No. 35 in D ('Haffner' serenade)	Columbia LX 851/3


BEETHOVEN

CHAPTER TEN

BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

WHEN WE ARE dealing with people of the greatest excellence it is quite useless to try to decide who is the greatest. Do not, then, put yourself among those who argue that Bach is the greatest of all musicians—or Mozart, or Beethoven. . . Each great composer—and each less than great composer too—has his own special kind of supremacy.

I notice that Edward Holmes called Mozart the most intellectual among composers. A great French writer says of Beethoven: 'The first word which occurs to his followers who wish to praise his genius is neither science, nor art; it is *faith*.'

Here we see a difference in outlook. The human element is present in the music of Mozart, although, perhaps, we need to look for it. Beethoven on the other hand both by word and deed puts humanity first.

There is in Mozart a quality which the Greeks gave to the world. A quality of wisdom which showed itself in a capacity to examine questions without prejudice, without passion. The great Greek philosophers often felt a certainty in their judgements and a purpose in their knowledge. Their thought and their expression of thought to this day appears clear and direct. If you would know the classical spirit read Plato's account of the death of Socrates.

To that world Mozart truly belongs—even though he

caught sight of another. That, perhaps, is as should be; for the eighteenth century was deeply conscious of the debt owed to the Greeks.

Beethoven often enquired, uncertain whether there could be any answer. He cursed fate, felt passionate anger, loved and hated, fought for causes, escaped from the world of men to that of nature, feeling the latter as personal as the former. Beethoven hoped not only to entertain with his music, but also to instruct. He regarded himself as a leader of men, as a great teacher. He looked at his own misfortunes—poverty, domestic unhappiness, deafness—as experiences which might help others to bear theirs.

His own sayings help us to come nearer in understanding to his music. He hoped 'that the unhappy being may be consoled in finding another as unfortunate as himself, who in face of all obstacles has done everything possible to become worthy of the name, MAN.'

A friend, writing of Beethoven to Goethe, recalled this.

'I have no friend, I must live alone; but I know that in my heart God is nearer to me than to others. I approach him without fear, I have always known him. Neither am I anxious about my music, which no adverse fate can overtake, and which will free him who understands it from the misery which afflicts others.'

About nature we find: 'I love a tree more than a man.'

Or, with less of bitterness: 'Almighty God! In the woods I am happy, happy in the woods, where each tree speaks through Thee. O God, what splendour! In the forests, on the hills, it is the calm, the quiet, that helps me.'

If you turn back you will see the spiritual link between Beethoven and Wagner. Both were Germans. Both were

subject to the nature of German nineteenth century thought. Both were heirs to, and exponents of, the Romantic philosophy, which had come to regard Man as the centre of the universe.

Many people still live within this general philosophy. Man is still regarded as of more real significance than God—to Whom, however, some respect may be paid as an insurance against wrong calculation. People still hope for some universal brotherhood—as particularly expressed by Beethoven in the words which he chose for the last, the choral movement, of the ninth symphony.

The fifth symphony took on special significance during the last war. In 1792 Beethoven wrote:

To do all the good one can,
To love liberty above everything,
And even if it be for a kingdom,
Never to betray truth.

This might be remembered when Beethoven's known love of liberty is paraded. Liberty, yes: but no betrayal of the truth.

We are beginning to arrive at a crucial (and difficult) point in our study of music. Truth is a word to be used strictly. It is easy to think that we know what truth is: it is not easy to know that we know what truth is. If we consider that truth merely consists of saying 'Yes' when 'No' would be misleading or inaccurate we have one part, and one part only, of the matter. If, on the other hand, we look at the lives—perhaps, more accurately, at the deaths—of some great men we have another, and greater, part. King Charles I was executed because his purpose in life conflicted

with that of his opponents. He may have been more wrong than right or more right than wrong: it depends on the point of view. He did, however, hold fast to what he considered his ordained purpose. He did not, in spite of the mistakes which he may have made, depart from certain ideals. In such a case we may criticise, but we must admire. What we admire is a realization of some greater truth than can be contained in 'Yes' and 'No'.

We have clues towards Beethoven's appreciation of truth in others. He admired such men as the Netherland hero Egmont and the Roman Coriolanus. He read their lives, recognizing that each was constant to some great ideal, through the dramas of Goethe, von Collin and Shakespeare and wrote music which with its own, musical, nobility has also a greater nobility. This is because the music is appropriate to the subjects. We also know how Beethoven showed his anger when Napoleon destroyed an ideal.

A composer is able to show that he approves certain ideas, or ideals. He can, for instance, write a Mass (or any other work to sacred words). It is, on the whole, unlikely that a great musician will compose a Mass in complete disbelief. But it is possible to show no more than casual interest. Thus, in the eighteenth century, Masses were written which were entertaining. Up to a point such music may do a little spiritual good and no great harm; but often the difficulties of the spiritual life are made to appear slight

Beethoven set the Mass most magnificently in the *Missa Solemnis*, which he undertook in honour of the enthronement of his friend the Archduke Rudolph as Archbishop of Olmütz, but which in the end took much longer in completion than had been anticipated. This great work, which

belongs to the period of the ninth symphony, is too great for church use, disobeys the conventions of the liturgy, is overwhelming in the originality of its harmonies and scoring and in the vigour of its rhythms. As in the last pianoforte sonatas and string quartets—particularly the great fugue (Op. 133) in B flat—Beethoven makes nothing easy for the listener. But that such music is difficult to listen to is not because the composer is trying to be clever or demonstrative (which is the source of bad art), but because he is searching to express his own convictions. So profoundly did Goethe feel the power of Beethoven's mind that he said that in it 'the gods are at work strewing seeds for future discernment'. In such a man there can be no betrayal of the greater truth.

So much, for the time being, of Beethoven the man. As to the musician it is worth while finding someone who knew him.

By good fortune we know one who heard both Mozart and Beethoven play the pianoforte. This is about their gifts in extemporization, and is quoted from Edward Holmes's fascinating *Ramble among the Musicians of Germany*, which was published the year after Beethoven's death.

'Mozart was inspired in modulation, all the profound and mysterious affinities of chords were touched upon as his hand wandered over the keys, there was magic in his fingers, he had graceful melody and sentiment ever ready to adorn his subject; but this was mere poetic luxury to him, he could involve his subjects in all the subtleties of canon, and arrive on the spot at the result of a mathematical problem. To invent off-hand in the last-mentioned style is to soar with weights on the wings.

'In Beethoven's musical mind was to be found an undecaying fancy; there was a tender song in his melodies, great fire and energy in working up his subject; but the poet predominated in him too much over the musician to lead him into the display of that learned and scholastic treatment of it in which Mozart indulged. Beethoven was not *integrally* the musician that the other was, yet in his andantes and other slow movements there is frequently to be found a spirit no less affectionate and enchanting than Mozart.'

This is valuable because it tells us what a contemporary thought of Beethoven. If you don't follow it all ask someone to help you. (That is the answer to 'difficult' passages in all books.)

The paragraph about Beethoven may be examined, phrase by phrase, and applied to that music of his with which we are familiar. 'Undecaying fancy.' There were nine symphonies, thirty-two pianoforte sonatas, masses, chamber music, an opera, overtures, concertos, and innumerable other works. In no two works does Beethoven say the same thing.

At one extreme we have—the 'Minuet in G', at the other the great Mass in D, from one point of view the most overwhelming of all his works. We have humour—as in a little piece describing a lost penny. Even humour branches out in many directions. Notice the percussion in the last symphony, or the character of almost any scherzo. We have vast intellectual and philosophic scrutiny as in the great fugue (Op. 133) for string quartet. We have country dances, waltzes and minuets. We have the seventh symphony, which Wagner regarded as a gigantic dance.

'Tender song in his melodies.' Listen to the slow movement of the second symphony, to the oboe melody which

arrives in the major key in the Funeral March of the 'Eroica' symphony, to the whole of the *Violin Concerto* (of all works by Beethoven the most fundamentally 'tender'), to the variations which make the slow movement of the 'Archduke' trio.

In such passages we are made to feel the singing, human quality. We may feel the character of many German folk songs which are often rhythmically square but also sentimental. Beethoven makes his melodies less square by his sweeping phrases, less sentimental because more tender. Sentiment comes when a selfish attitude is adopted, when self-pity is apparent. Beethoven's pity is not for himself but for others.

This is a guide to players. Think of phrases and not of individual bars (with strong beats in every bar). Follow Beethoven's expression marks and not your own.

'Great fire and energy.' We need look now no further than the fifth symphony, although you might vary your experience by listening to the pianoforte concerto in C Minor (Op. 37). This is in the same key and the first movement is of wonderful energy.

'The poet.' Schumann speaks most to the point here.

'In composing his "Pastoral" symphony Beethoven well understood the danger he incurred. His explanatory remark "Rather expressive of the feeling than tone painting", contains an entire aesthetic system for composers. And it is absurd for painters to portray him sitting beside a brook, his head in his hands, listening to the bubbling water!. . . .

'When Beethoven conceived and carried out his idea for the "Pastoral" symphony, it was not a single short spring day that inspired him to utter his cry of joy, but the dark

commingling of lofty songs above us (as Heine, I believe, somewhere says). The manifold voices of creation stirred within him.'

The last phrase contains the whole meaning of the word poet.

I like the hint given to those whose pictorial sensibility overshadows their musical.

The 'Pastoral' symphony illustrates what our informant had to say about Beethoven being 'not integrally the musician that Mozart was'. Beethoven goes outside of music, and uses real rustic music, imitates bird song, creates, realistically, a storm. Thus music becomes more dramatic in a theatrical sense, more demonstrative, less purely musical. In fact the art of music changes its function—until eventually it arrives at Wagner. And later at, say, Schönberg whose *Pierrot Lunaire* will show how far away from established musical practice a genius can go, while still convincing us of his artistery.

Ideally one should read all the plays of Shakespeare. Ideally one should become acquainted with all the symphonies of Beethoven. The latter is not an impossible objective and gives a sense of purpose whether to study or recreation. Listen to all the works of Beethoven that are available to you. But *learn* the symphonies: so that you can quote melodies from them, reach the point where, when turning on the wireless in mid-course, you can tell what is going to happen next.

There was a classic book written about the symphonies of Beethoven by Sir George Grove. It is not out of date, although its prose is less jagged and rough than ours, and you must read it some day.

However, let us briefly look at the symphonies. First what

difference do you notice between those of Beethoven and those of Haydn? The former are longer. The orchestra is often bigger. The works sound more important (which does not mean that they are *better* music), more full of ideas. Each idea is more thoroughly explored. There is more intention to surprise. Intimacy is less apparent. Beethoven seems to have a vaster audience in mind. Because the audience is vaster, less aristocratic, more democratic—in ideal at any rate—there is more effort to make the 'message' clear by dramatic underlining.

The distinction is between two ages: the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. What is true of the symphonies is equally true of the other music. If, in fact, you have a good working knowledge of the symphonies you can see the meaning and purpose of the concertos, the chamber music, and so on.

The first symphony appeared in 1800. It had been in mind for at least five years. Beethoven, incidentally, was not one of your rapid workers. He tried his music over and over again, altering his drafts (his sketches still exist to show his method and his perserverance) until he was finally satisfied. The work was dedicated to Baron van Swieten.

The first chord takes us unawares. We are not on a straight bit of road but a bend. We are surprised by being in a key in which the movement is not written. The slow introduction moves slowly by, bringing us to a point where we meet the *Allegro con brio*. A scale, and no one could make scales sound less like our general impression of scales than Beethoven, guides us to the first tune. We are then not far from Haydn's country. As the earlier pianoforte sonatas show there was some overlapping between Beethoven's

territory and that of Haydn, who was (not for very long) his master. The minuet shows Haydn again. Haydn had made minuets quicker, characteristically, for fun. Beethoven follows suit. But the fun is a little more vicious. Look at the miniature score and notice the effect of the *sforzando*.

When you look at the symphonies note their keys. Later on arrange those works (of Beethoven) with which you are familiar according to key. For instance, the overture to *Prometheus* is in C major. Between this and the symphony there are obvious connections. It is rather noticeable that by this period of musical history particular keys were recognized as having particular associations.

The second symphony is in D major, as also is the *Violin Concerto* and the Op. 28 sonata. All these works possess both breadth and geniality. Geniality is not quite the right word for the *Missa solennis*, but the knowledge that other works belong to D major gives some emphasis at least to the final 'Dona nobis pacem' (Give us peace).

The first movement of the second symphony gives a 'popular' tune an airing. It is the 'second subject'. You needn't know that it is the second subject. Wait until you hear the first tune which you could sing after the quick bit has started. That is it. The second movement is based on a melody of great breadth and beauty: simple but most moving on account of its shape. After that notice how Beethoven varies it. Beethoven's variations are not merely decorative. They show the character of the given melody in, so far as we know, all its aspects. Mozart would have understood the finale. The genial key becomes also festive and there is more than one reminder of Mozart's 'Haffner' symphony.

With the third symphony (1804) we have Beethoven not

only exhibiting life but also criticizing it. It has a Funeral March (compare with that of the A flat major sonata Op. 26) —a great pageant in itself. 'Probably', says Romain Rutland, 'Beethoven's mind was occupied with the misery and wretchedness caused by war [more] than the single hero of that period who reaped both glory and dishonour at one blow.' The pageant atmosphere is attached to the whole symphony. We are conscious of the richness of the orchestral colouring. In particular of the horns which have, almost literally, a field day in the hunting calls of the scherzo.

The fifth piano concerto was in E flat and was called the 'Emperor'. Beethoven didn't call it that, but perhaps someone noticed that it had some of the qualities of the symphony.

The fourth symphony (1807) in B flat is often overlooked. It is not grandiose, nor is it in any way severe. Because it has so many virtues which would be appreciated by the more modest among music lovers it is too often denied to them. In the last year of his life Beethoven was visited by an old friend. 'Today, my old friend,' said the friend, 'there are no black looks on your face.' This is the Beethoven of the fourth symphony.

The slow movement is again a song. A full, rich song which dominates, by its serenity, a persistent rhythmic figure. The minuet movement treats conventional rhythms with disdain and proclaims that syncopation is no novelty.

Moving through the symphonies we discover the emotional power of rich harmonies, of unexpected changes of key, of orchestral colouring—the woodwind, the brass and the timpani have developed beyond the wildest dreams of the composers of half-a-century earlier. But above all there is

the dramatic force of reiterated rhythm. In this respect Beethoven belongs to our time and speaks in accents which are familiar to us.

The fifth symphony is a study in rhythmic declamation. It is written for an orchestra which includes three trombones, double bassoon and piccolo. The importance of the 'message' is thus shown, even though the additional instruments are reserved for the last movement. It was the composer himself who, of the opening, explained: 'Thus fate knocks at the door'.

The sixth symphony—the 'Pastoral'—has already called for comment. It is a poem rather than a painting. We appreciate it through the beauty of its sounds rather than through imagining pictures and enjoying them in isolation. Beethoven added his own warning in his title:
'Pastoral Symphony, or a recollection of country life. More an expression of feeling than a painting.'

This symphony might have been a choral symphony. Beethoven considered introducing voices into the final song of thankfulness.

Beethoven's symphonies are unities. Take away a movement and you destroy the whole. His symphonies are not merely collections of separate pieces. They are books—mostly of four chapters—in which the narrative is gradually but inevitably developed from beginning to end. In no symphony is this more clear than in the seventh (1812). If we accept Wagner's idea of dance, then this symphony contains every dance that ever was.

The seventh symphony is gigantic: the eighth in contrast:
'full of a wonderfully buoyant humor . . . of a kindly,

high-spirited man, with moods of tenderness and seriousness coming to the surface from time to time.'

The *allegretto* contains musical reference to the newly-invented metronome. The inventor was Maelzel, a friend of Beethoven.

Beethoven knew this work as 'the little one'. Ten years passed before the ninth symphony. The last movement is a setting, in variation form, of Schiller's 'Ode to Joy'. Thus the symphony is generally known as the 'Choral'.

This symphony, together with three movements from the *Missa Solennis*, was first performed on May 7th, 1824. It had been five years in the writing.

To discuss this work in a paragraph is as impossible as to describe a continent within the same limits. This is where personal experience alone can count. We must visit and re-visit and then find how little we have seen. Let us say that this symphony contains everything that Beethoven thought and felt about music. It has fear, courage, hope, inspiration, loneliness, brotherhood. Learned men—as always with the greatest works—can prove what they wish to prove from examining this music. One may contradict another. Do not think that the learned men are wrong. Like the professors in *The Water Babies* they only see one part of a larger whole.

How do we begin to see the whole? In my view, by seeing from the inside as well as the outside. You will be better off by buying Beethoven's symphonies and by playing them (some day) in piano duet arrangement than by learning about subjects and modulations and bridge passages. . . .

By all means learn these merely technical terms—but not *before* you know the music.

'Why do I write? What I have in my heart must come out; and that is why I compose.' So wrote Beethoven. His music also goes to the heart. It must be felt before it can be understood. Indeed it cannot be understood. In that lies its power. But also its beauty.

X: *BEETHOVEN*

Works to perform

Minuet in G (Violin and pianoforte)	Associated Board
Minuets, Bagatelles, etc.	Hinrichsen
Scale of D Flat, The (Round for 3 voices)	Clarendon Song Book II —O.U.P.
Sonatas for pianoforte	Associated Board
Songs	Boosey and Hawkes
Symphony No. 2 in D (Pianoforte duet)	Schirmer

Works to hear

Concerto in D for violin and orchestra	HMV DB 2927/32
Concerto No. 3 in C minor for pianoforte and orchestra	HMV DB 6196/99
Overture—*Leonora No. 3*	Decca K 1849/50
Quartet No. 7 in F ('Rasoumowsky' No. 1)	Columbia DX 1067/71
Sonata in D for cello and pianoforte)	Columbia LX 1136/7
Symphony No. 6 in F (The 'Pastoral')	HMV DB 6473/7

BACH.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BACH

(1685-1750)

'BACH! HUH!' SAID the cross man and started to walk away. 'Oh dear!' said the more polite young lady with black hair and brown eyes, 'I'm afraid I mustn't stay for your lecture on Bach. I really must go and do some mending.' The clergyman picked up his hat. 'I'm afraid that I am stupid but I cannot understand Bach. I am sure you will forgive me. I have a sermon to prepare.''Bach, boys. This is where we go.' This is was the schoolmaster.

One man stayed. He had a wild look, long hair, and ill-fitting clothes. He was what most bank managers think musicians look like. He was, in fact, a bank manager. I couldn't stand it. I snatched my bag and left. The lecture was never given.

This, of course, was many years ago. No doubt people feel quite differently now. But you can never tell.

I reached the tram stop. I felt more cheerful. There was the nice young lady with black hair and brown eyes. 'What's the trouble?' I asked. As I paid her fare she had to tell me. 'Well, I like Mendelssohn, Chopin, Handel. I can listen to Beethoven. (And, by the way, I must thank you for your lectures . . . [which was the first time anyone had]). But Bach. He is so dull.' 'Dull!' I ought to have been angry. I would have been with anybody else. 'Dull! Have you heard. . . ' 'I am so sorry. You will think me very

stupid. I have never managed to hear any music by Bach.'

That started it. I played the organ in those days. She used to come into the organ loft on Wednesday evenings. You can make up the rest of that story for yourself!

But old Bach, long before he was old Bach, used to take a young lady into his organ loft. He was a very nice person. He liked people and because he liked people he wrote a great deal of music to tell them so. Friendly music, warm-hearted music. When he got to know his friends better he let them into his own private thoughts. Always our private thoughts are on the difficult problems of life.

When we meet for the first time we talk about the weather, about Denis Compton, about dogs and cats. Later on we talk about politics and governments. Later on again we talk about God. We are not being 'highbrow'. We are being honest.

Bach talked about everything—as did Beethoven—because he was anxious to make friends. He has left, in his music, a series of conversations. We must, each one of us, find the right conversation to start with. Music being what it is, and Bach being what he was, we can take part in the conversation. We can, more almost than with any other composer, become part of the music.

Become part of the music? Music needs a composer, a performer (or performers) and an audience. The performers and the audience may be one and the same. Do you remember at the very beginning of this book we were among a crowd at Swansea? We were all taking part in the singing. What we did and what we heard we found very inspiring.

Some of the little pieces by Bach were written for Mrs Bach. They went into a collection which, known by her

name, is called the *Anna Magdalena Book*. Minuets, musettes, polonaises and other pleasant little things. Just as Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* fitted the domestic circle, so did the *Anna Magdalena Book*. The difference is that Mendelssohn had in mind a nineteenth-century, Bach an eighteenth-century room. Mendelssohn had to hand the nineteenth-century pianoforte. Bach was accustomed to earlier keyboard instruments: the harpsichord and the clavichord. These instruments were unlike the pianoforte because they could not sustain sounds. Nor were they so expressive. Nor could rich effects be derived from chords held by the sustaining pedal.

The clavichord was the more expressive of Bach's instruments and he is said to have preferred it. The harpsichord was the more powerful and could achieve variety by certain stop changes (as on the organ), by changing manuals (again as on the organ), by opening (by pressing a pedal) the lid. This produced some sort of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* effect. Further, the harpsichord could have pedals attached. This was an advantage in an organist's house, because practice could be done without paying the organ blower.

The character of instruments affects the style of music. Rapid passages in Bach or Handel sound more brilliant on the harpsichord than on the pianoforte. Separate parts—as in fugues—sound clearer, if thinner. Ornaments, with which the music of these composers is plentifully sprinkled, sound more in place. They frequently disguise the inability of the instrument to sustain.

We need something of an effort to imagine the harpsichord or the clavichord behind the music which we hear played, as a rule, on a more modern instrument. It is worth

making the effort. I always like to feel that any piece of music that I enjoy has been specially and newly composed for me. My favourite music is *my* favourite music—not yours, not Sir Malcolm Sargent's. The composer and I are together, talking to each other. The composer does most of the talking, of course, but every now and then I tell him I agree with him. I play a passage again. Or I disagree with him. 'Why did you write that?', I ask.

The imagination can help further. Mr Bach is at home. It is a Wednesday morning in the year 1725. He has just finished giving a music lesson to the boys of the School of St Thomas, where he is Cantor (i.e. music master). He takes up the cantata on which he is busy for next Sunday at St Thomas's Church. He must get it finished. He managed three movements on Tuesday. It should have been four but he spent longer than he should in telling the children a story at bed time.

Mr Bach goes on with the cantata. Which one? I don't know. He wrote between two and three hundred. He was expected to write them because Leipzig was proud of its music. It relied on its chief musicians to provide new music, for there was not a great deal of printed music available.

As Mr Bach works away his boy Wilhelm Friedmann, away from school with a cold, practises some of the pieces written for him by his father. Some, indeed, of the preludes and fugues from Book I of the 'Forty-Eight'.

'Poor boy!' you say. Not at all. He was very pleased to have music written for him by his own father. The other boys were sorry that he had to practice under the old man's nose (they were no more polite about Bach than any schoolboys about any schoolmaster); secretly they were envious.

There were about the room pieces written by Wilhelm's brother, Carl Philip Emmanuel. He was eleven and very clever.

Mr Bach manages to work quite happily with the elder boy busy with the fugues. He finishes an aria. 'Anna', he calls, 'milk, please.' Mrs Bach runs in from the kitchen with the milk. She, by the way, is not the young lady in the organ loft. That was Maria Barbara, Bach's first wife, who died in 1720. Anna Magdalena married in 1721. She was the daughter of a trumpeter and knew a thing or two about music.

The cantata is finished by the middle of the day. A quick meal and Bach has to see the Rector of the school. One boy had given another a black eye. What had Mr Bach to say about it? Why wasn't he looking? What would the parents say (about the black eye)? The visit to the Rector wasted a lot of time. In the evening a rehearsal for two hours with the University Musical Society.

An hour or two spent in copying music. Bed.

One time when there was no bed, however, was Sunday morning. The seventh day was by no means a day of rest for a large number of Leipzigers. Ministers had their sermons (standard length one hour by the hour-glass) to deliver, and, of course the services of the church to supervise. Choir-boys were beaten into Sabbath tidiness and decorum, into church and out of church, into singing the right notes of the day's cantata (which, with rather little practice, they would not sing right anyway); all of which meant that their masters (including Bach) had a time of it.

Up early, Bach needed to deal with his own family first, then to the school to see the boys there, next to the church

of St Nicholas or St Thomas (wherever the principal choir was to sing) to superintend the setting out of parts, and the arrangement of all the things that organists to this day have to see to. A long, long service. Holy Communion was the morning service. This, with a cantata before the sermon and the sermon itself, must have seemed incredibly long. And in winter the churches were very cold. Home. But not much rest. For in the afternoon there was the service of Vespers. And on the great Festivals of the Church everything was bigger and longer! An 'important' musician would not have put up with the life!

Bach was not very important in his own day. He was a provincial musician. Nothing like so famous as the talkative Mattheson of Hamburg or the cosmopolitan Mr Handel. Bach was not particularly well paid. He rarely had very good singers to sing his music.

He went on from day to day doing what he had to do. He was quite proud of his organ playing. People did sometimes remark that he was as good as any player in Germany. They said this because he could play very quick music, particularly with the pedals; also because he tried all the most exciting effects with the stops.

No cinema organist could ever compete with Bach. The cinema organist uses the same stops all the time. And Bach never did that.

Sometimes he extemporized while the collection was being taken, or before the hymns (chorales) were sung. The clergy looked cross because the congregation seemed to be enjoying itself. But Bach took a poor view of preachers who spent an hour saying nothing and then complaining because his voluntaries lasted two and a half minutes.

Bach had a habit of taking tunes with which his congregations were familiar and decorating them. Somehow he had the gift of making Christmas tunes—like *In dulci jubilo*—sound more Christmassy, Passion Chorales more sad, Easter hymns more triumphant. By listening to Bach's chorale preludes we are able to feel much more strongly the spirit of the church's teaching.

Bach was a devout Lutheran. He was a great poet. He was a superb craftsman. Put these together and you will surely arrive at one of the greatest of all church musicians.

If you play the piano you can play the chorale preludes if someone will play the pedal part—preferably in octaves. That is a good start to the serious side of Bach.

Play also the chorales that you can find in any hymn book. Notice the poetic manner in which Bach harmonizes the melodies.

The chorales were the most inspiring and lasting outcome of the Reformation. They were for the Germans of Bach's day and faith a part of their heritage. Again turn to Wales and compare the fervour with which the Welsh sing *Aberystwyth*, *Ton-y-botel*, or any other of their own magnificent hymns. With comparable fervour the Germans of the eighteenth century regarded their church music tradition.

The church cantatas were built on chorales. They were, in one way, variations on a theme. They required soloists, choir and orchestra. All these performers had their place in the gallery at the west end of the Church of St Thomas—and also of St Nicholas, Bach directed the music of both churches.

During Passiontide it had long been the tradition to perform a complete musical setting of the story of the Passion. Bach's *St Matthew Passion* is not only the greatest of these settings, but one of the most sublime works in existence. Listen to these movements:

'Come ye daughters.'
'O God how deep how dread.'
'My Saviour Jesus now is taken.'
'See the Saviour's outstretched arm.'
'And behold the veil of the Temple.'
''Twas in the cool of eventide.'
'Lord, though awhile in tears of sorrow.'

Listen to these movements not solely with the intention of expecting a musical experience. Listen in expectation of having the greatest event in Christian history shown to you as a reality.

Turn to the *Mass in B Minor* and compare the 'Crucifixus' and the 'Et resurrexit'. Turn to the *Christmas Oratorio* for the story of the Nativity.

You will find that Bach turned over in his music every detail of the Christian story. He used every means at his disposal to illustrate the story. No word spoken by bishop or minister can compare with the profundity of Bach's utterance. Apart from the Bible itself there is nothing nobler in the whole of our tradition.

All this great music came from the chorale, as foundation; the Italian practice of telling narrative in recitative and expanding emotional feeling through aria; the German tradition of putting communal observation into the mouths of church choirs; and adding support to voices and colour to the drama with a local orchestra.

Especially in the *Mass in B Minor* we are conscious of fugal music. Fugal music sounded effective always with voices. Keyboard music borrowed the model and altered it to its own convenience.

Fugues—how everyone who has never heard them hates them. Take no notice. Some people say—subject, answer, episode, stretto. . . That (*plus* some more) is fugue to them. Not to me. A fugue is, like a nocturne or a ballad or a sonata, a piece of music. It is either good as a musical experience or it is bad. Many of us learn to write bad fugues and become Doctors of Music. Bach wrote good fugues and didn't become a doctor of anything.

How do you know a good fugue? You want to hear it played again. You remember it. You may remember the actual notes. You may remember it in a general sense. If this is the case you recall the character, just as in books or poetry.

The B flat minor prelude and fugue in the first book of the 'Forty-Eight' is, as it were, a brief contemplation on the subjects discussed in the Passion music. The D major fugue in the same book sounds dramatic in a very secular way. In the second book the ninth fugue was once called—'The Saints in Glory'. The Prelude and Fugue in E flat pass, so it might seem, 'the quiet waters by'. Unconsciously this is one way in which we may recall music.

Notice that it doesn't help at all, really, if the composer has given a title to his music. We still go on thinking round the music in our own way. (Music with words is clearly different because the words add definite images).

The organ recital is out of fashion, I fear. Years ago a trip to Liverpool to hear the organ in St George's Hall was

one of the great pleasures of life. We used to collect details about organs (builder, names of stops, etc.) in one book; of railway engines in another. The great organ works of Bach, lots of fugues among them, are immensely great and among the major musical experiences of life. The 'great G minor', the 'little G minor', the 'great B minor', the 'Giant', the 'St Anne'. So, with affection, those of us who play the organ remember them. The other day I heard the Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor in the Royal Albert Hall. Alas! it was orchestrated. It still sounded mighty, but not so much as when played on the instrument for which it was written.

Bach wrote these organ works so that he could play them at recitals.

He was in the habit of writing music for particular occasions. If he were alive now we should call Bach 'versatile'. He knew all there was to know about church music. He knew all he had to know about music in schools. He was connected with a university—in Leipzig. He dealt with the city council over the provision of music for civic occasions.

He was a court musician. In mid-life, before he went to Leipzig, where he spent the last twenty-five years of his career, he was attached to the courts of Weimar and Cöthen.

Then he composed orchestral music—suites and concertos. The Brandenburg concertos show his great skill in what was a fairly new province of music.

'Originating in the desire for homely, social musical enjoyment, Bach's concerted instrumental pieces more nearly approach the modern idea of chamber music than of music for the concert-hall orchestra.'[1]

This should be borne in mind.

[1] From *Bach* by Rutland Boughton.

You know what a school concert is like. Some of the music sounds good, some not so good. But we make allowances. We want to encourage our friends. We are quite proud because we have a wobbly bassoon and a squeaky oboe. We don't notice all the imperfections. We enjoy the music for its own sake and for the sake of the perspiring performers.

So, I think, it often was in Bach's day. His audiences were nearer to the music than are often modern audiences. They went for the music—and the refreshments—and were not concerned over much about BIG NAMES.

Because he was not a BIG NAME Bach became one. Many of the BIG NAMES of his day have been rubbed off the record of history. The popular, hero-worshipped figure is too busy being popular to see very far beyond his own nose. The poet withdraws from publicity, avoids the crowds, and has time for thought.

A little over two centuries ago Bach's son Carl Philip Emmanuel was in the service of Frederick the Great. 'I wish you would get your father over from Leipzig,' said the king one day early in 1747. On a spring day of that year a courtier brought to the king a list of coach passengers. Frederick cast his eye over the list. His face brightened. 'Gentlemen, old Bach has arrived.'

Off to the music room. Old Bach was not allowed to put his best suit on. His old travelling clothes had to serve while he played to the king. One outcome of this visit was the work known as 'A Musical Offering' which was written on a tune given to Bach by the king and dedicated by the composer to his patron.

This must have been pleasant. It was, however, very

exceptional. Bach's life was unspectacular, modest and domestic. He was not discontented with his lot.

For the rest all that matters is in his music. His music is for everybody ranging in age from six to ninety-six. If you don't believe me have a look at it.

All this the young lady and I talked about on the tram. We went far beyond our stop. 'Well', said the conductor, 'what have you been talking about?' 'Bach', I said. Bless my soul, he believed me. To show that he was a very good (tram) conductor he whistled what he knew as 'the air on the G string'. That proves my point, doesn't it?

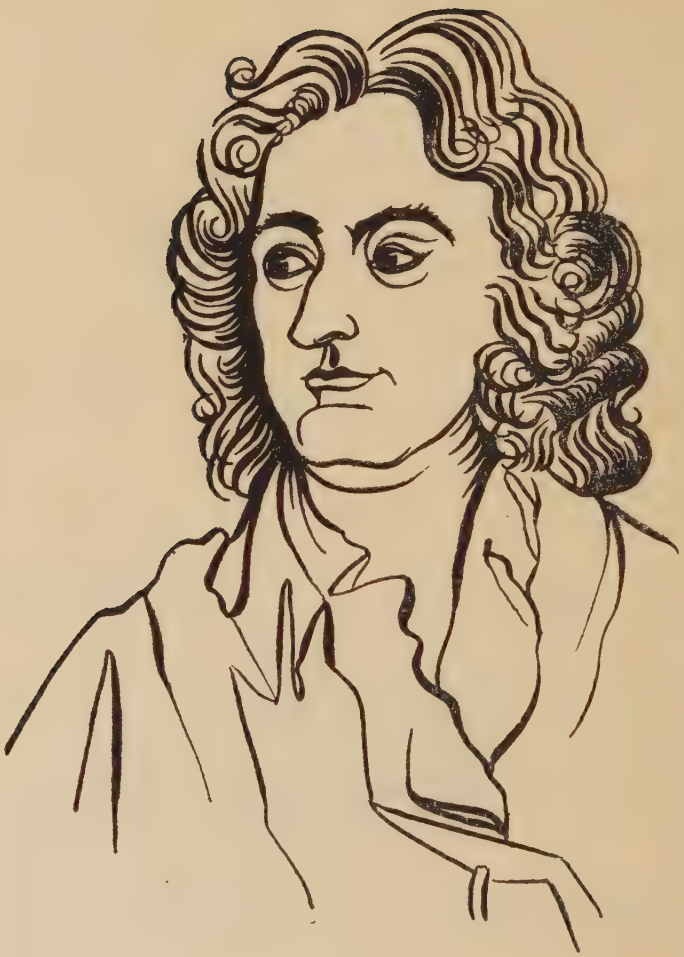
XI: *BACH*

Works to perform

Anna Magdalena Book (Selected Pieces)	Augener
Bach Chorales, The Pianist's Book	O.U.P.
48 Preludes and Fugues	Associated Board
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (arr. for almost anything)	O.U.P.
Sheep may safely graze (arr. for almost anything)	O.U.P.
Solos from the Church Cantatas	Novello

Works to hear

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G	Columbia LX 443
Chorale preludes for organ	Columbia. Vol. II. Bach Organ Music Society
Concerto in F minor, for pianoforte and orchestra	HMV DB 4679/80
My heart ever faithful	Columbia DX 1022
Preludes and fugues for organ	Columbia—Bach Organ Music Society Vol. I and III
St Matthew Passion	HMV DB 6516/6531



LUCRETIA

CHAPTER TWELVE

PURCELL

(1659-1695)

I AM SURE THAT it is not fair to make poor Purcell look as though he is merely a reserve, so to speak. But look at the composers already put into our team—and now think of all those not chosen. There is, as a matter of fact, a good reason for putting Purcell where he is.

The greater part of what Purcell wrote is, unfortunately, not very accessible. So many think: old music = dull music. This is the wrong solution of the equation, as by now you know.

(good) old music = good, alive music.
(bad) „ „ = bad, dead music.
(good) new „ = good, alive music.
(bad) „ „ = bad, dead music.

'What is good music?' If you ask that now you had better turn to the beginning of the book and read it all through again.

You will remember that a number of pieces by various composers have nicknames. Haydn claims a lot; Bach, surprisingly, comes high on the list; Mendelssohn and Chopin too are prominent. If we think over these nicknames—even though the composers didn't always know them—we do find some guide to the character of the music.

Purcell has one entry. A sonata for two violins, cello and

harpsichord, is known as the 'Golden' sonata. No one knows why one sonata (much more a suite of short pieces than a work of the form used by Beethoven) in a collection should be so-called. But there is aptness in the title.

Purcell's music is, in its own right, aristocratic (i.e. 'of the best'). It is brilliant; but the more subdued brilliance of gold rather than the glitter of silver. In this quality Purcell shares with Mozart. There is between Mozart and Purcell an underlying perception of the spiritual world which has nothing to do with time.

Purcell, like Mozart, used few notes rather than many and achieved with a handful of instruments much more than many composers with more elaborate resources. His opera *Dido and Aeneas*, asks for four or five fairly good singers, a little choir, anything from five to a dozen strings. And yet it is an unforgettable opera.

Songs such as 'Fairest Isle', 'Nymphs and Shepherds', 'Shepherd, shepherd, leave your labours', which are very well known, are well known because they inspire simply by the grace and beauty of their melodies. You need no accompaniment to enjoy these tunes—even though it is helpful to have the bass: they have, together with many songs by Purcell which you don't (as yet) know, the memorable quality of folk-songs.

Some of the songs of Purcell did in fact become folk-songs in that they were put, in 1728, into the *Beggar's Opera*.

Purcell started his musical career as did many other great composers. He was a choir boy in the Chapel Royal—the king's private chapel.

To have been a choir boy in the 1660's in the Chapel Royal must have been exhilarating. The choir master—

Captain Cooke—was an ex-serviceman. He had been commissioned in the king's army in 1642. His interests must have been wider than is often the case with choir masters. His ability as a composer was, apparently, limited, although he did write the ceremonial music for the coronation of Charles II. Captain Cooke was, however, a good singer and expert on the lute.

Purcell's early life must have been plentifully splashed with colour. He would have heard as a small boy of the return to England of Charles II. He would have heard of the dull days of the Commonwealth, when church music was reduced, when theatres were shut. Dullness would have been frowned on at home, for a musician's prosperity depends on other people's liveliness.

Henry Purcell would have heard a good deal more than small boys should of the naughtiness of the king. At the same time he would have appreciated the king's more attractive qualities. He would have remembered all his life what Charles said to him when, as a choir boy, he wrote an anthem for the royal birthday.

There would have been anxious days during the Plague: exciting, if frightening, days when the Great Fire devastated the City of London.

Dr Charles Burney gives the Chapel Royal background to Purcell's career.

'The small stock of choral Music with which the Chapel began, becoming in a few years somewhat less delightful by frequent repetition, the King perceiving a genius for composition in some of the young people of the Chapel, encouraged them to cultivate and exercise it; and many of the first set of choristers, even while they were children of

the Chapel, composed anthems and services that are still used in our cathedrals. These, by the King's special command, were accompanied by violins, cornets, and sackbuts, to which instruments introductory symphonies and ritornels were given, and the performers of them placed in the organ-loft.'

When you hear the 'Bell' anthem ('Rejoice in the Lord') you will find the royal influence in the charming, if light, orchestration. As also in the not-to-be-thought-of-as-very-religious rhythms. With Charles II the newest continental ideas came into England. Some were French. The type of orchestra, with violins rather than viols, was that which Charles had enjoyed while in exile in France. Recitative, to be noticed in the operas, solo songs and anthems, which sometimes makes us think that Purcell is Handel or Bach, came from Italy. Later on in Purcell's life there were opportunities to study the new music of Corelli and Stradella. Although this was after King Charles's day, Purcell continued to keep up to date. He introduced Italian instrumental method into his technique.

Revolutions in the seventeenth century were not only social and political.

'The old masters of Music, Dr Child, Dr Gibbons, Mr Low, etc., organists to His Majesty, hardly knew how to comport themselves with these new-fangled ways, but proceeded in their compositions, according to the old style. . . .'

It may be taken as typical of the older Englishman that, when asked to follow new ways, he says nothing but merely continues doing what he always had done. Our Dr Child, Dr Gibbons and Mr Low we may meet any day—under different names.

Purcell as a choir boy

Purcell, quick, sensitive, practical was a child of the new age.

He applauded instrumental music, dance music, singing that was brilliant in execution, theatrical music and—public house music. The latter sounds more respectable when called 'tavern music'. Whatever it is called Purcell's music of this kind shows him to have had a good sense of what was required in that particular place.

How often have we pointed out that greatness depends, to some large degree, on putting the right thing in the right place. In this respect Purcell never made errors of judgement. The tragedy of English music has often been that most respectable would-be composers have made nothing but errors of judgement.

As a state and church musician Purcell showed dignity and pageantry. Later on Handel, newly arrived in England, admired these essential qualities. There were odes for the accession of James II, coronation music for that king's supplanters—William and Mary, works in honour of royal birthdays, for King Charles returning from the races, for the centenary of Trinity College, Dublin, for the annual dinner of Yorkshiremen in (voluntary) exile in London.

Why don't we usually hear this music?

Because we have lost a good deal of the *excitement* for music which persisted in England in Shakespeare's day, in Purcell's day, in Handel's day. When England was a small, poor, adventurous country our music flourished. Our ancestors built an empire, became commercially prosperous and went a long way towards losing their souls.

Purcell can teach us how to be cheerful in adversity, to be rich when we are poor, to enjoy ourselves within drama, music, poetry.

As has been suggested Purcell managed perfectly well with the limited means at his disposal.

As an entertainment for a girls' school we were given *Dido and Aeneas*. Now this is a 'classical' opera, being based on an episode in the wanderings of Aeneas. Purcell's sailors' music in this opera is excellent sailors' music, bright, breezy, forthright. His witches' music is nicely scarifying. The witches in *Macbeth* would have enjoyed it. His Belinda, with her cheeky tunes, reminds me of—well, I don't think I had better say. And then at the end of the opera we are reminded how near tragedy is to everyday life. 'When I am laid in earth' is one of the world's great tragic songs. Operatically it is right: in the wider field of existence it is right. It is also beautiful in its own musical character.

Purcell's other operatic music similarly reveals life as it is. Without being realistic it is real. The music of the *Fairy Queen* is as intimate with the Forest of Arden as *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, on which it is based. *King Arthur* mixes patriotism—Elgar's music is only different in manner from the final song 'St George, the Patron of our Isle'—with landscape painting. The Frost Scene gives as chilly a feel to our senses as any early morning appeal to economize electricity.

Purcell had the same gift as Mozart. He could, without leaving the proper province of music, enhance stage productions immeasurably. This was fully realized by his contemporaries.

Dryden wrote the text of an opera—*Albion and Albanius*. It was set by a Frenchman. Dryden knew that there would be criticism. In his introduction he protested M. Grabu's excellence for the benefit of those 'who maliciously endeavour

to decry him'. Dryden continues: 'When any of our countrymen excel him, I shall be glad, for the sake of old England, to be shown my error.'

In a year or two Dryden admitted the excellence of Purcell, with whom he happily collaborated in *King Arthur*.

On the untimely death of Purcell, Dryden wrote an impressive memorial ode. The last stanza reads—

The heav'nly choir, who heard his notes from high,
Let down the scale of Music from the sky:
They handed him along.
And all the way he taught, and all the way they sang.
Ye brethren of the lyre, and tuneful voice,
Lament his lot, but at your own rejoice.
Now live secure and linger out your days,
The gods are pleas'd alone with Purcell's lays.
Nor turn to mend their choice.

This started an epidemic of verses on the death of Purcell. His reputation was extraordinary.

Purcell was recognised to be one of those

endowed with highest gifts.
The vision and the faculty divine.

So that his tombstone in Westminster Abbey, where he had been organist, reads:

HERE LIES
HENRY PURCELL, ESQ.
WHO LEFT THIS LIFE
AND IS GONE TO THAT BLESSED PLACE
WHERE ONLY HIS HARMONY
CAN BE EXCEEDED

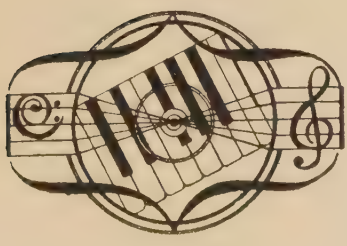
Time suggests that the high estimate of Purcell was not

wrong. He must take his place, then, with those others pre-eminent in vision and in possessing 'the faculty divine'.

We have two Englishmen in our book. You can appreciate the music of other countries more fully when you appreciate the music of your own.

Music is made by men. Some of it is home made. It is none the worse for that. We can *feel* the intimacy of what belongs to our own country, can enter into the mind of the maker. In so doing we become, ourselves, active. And in life that is all that matters. We must make some few things which are our own contribution to other people's lives. The alternative is to destroy. Our way is the poet's way, the musicians' way:

I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho' tomorrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.



XII: *PURCELL*

Works to perform

Fairy Queen (vocal score)	Novello
Original Works for the harpsichord (4 volumes)	Chester
O Sing unto the Lord (Anthem)	Novello
Sonata in G minor (2 violins, cello and pianoforte) The 'Golden'	Augener
Sonata in G minor (violin and pianoforte)	Associated Board
Songs (many available for school use)	Novello

Works to hear

Blessed Virgin's Expostulation	Columbia DX 1031
Dido and Aeneas	HMV C 3471/3477
Fairy Queen (3 dances)	Columbia DX 868
Fantasia upon one note	HMV C 3539
Rejoice in the Lord Alway ('Bell' Anthem)	Columbia History of Music DB 500
Trumpet tune (arr. organ)	Decca K 1914

THE END

Máire Elizabeth walked into the room when I was near the end of the last chapter.

'Who's that about?'

'Mr Purcell.'

'What's his other name?'

'Henry.'

A pause, and then,

'What did his mummy call him?'

Another pause.

'She *might* have called him Harry.'

'Was he ever naughty. . . .?'

There is a good history lesson and a guide to the reading of this, or any other book. For the study of history is not the learning of facts. The bare facts go so far and no further. In reading a book you must use facts so as to know how people thought and acted: you must learn to find the story behind the story. What did Mrs Purcell call her son? Does it matter? Of course it does; because when we feel that we may know the right sort of answer we feel that we are living with Mr Purcell.

When we are living with a musician we must also live with his music. Then we begin to 'understand' the music.

This book is about music makers. It is also, I hope, for music makers. Now music makers are readers and just as

you must use your imagination when reading a book so you must use your imagination as you read, perform, or listen to music.

We learned that a poet was one who made familiar things unfamiliar, and, therefore, new. The 'familiar' composer we respect: the 'unfamiliar' we love.

That is the end for all of us.

SET IN
FOURNIER OLD FACE
A LETTER BASED ON
THE ORIGINAL DESIGN
BY
PIERRE SIMON FOURNIER
WHO PUBLISHED HIS
TYPE SPECIMEN
BOOK IN
PARIS
IN
1742